CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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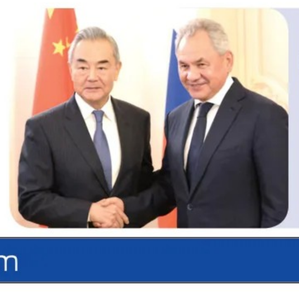
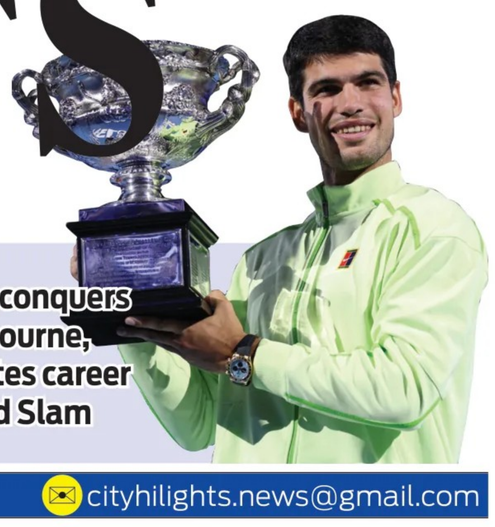


China-Russia hold security talks amid shifting global dynamics **P8**

China's housing slump shows tentative signs of stabilisation **P9**



P11 Alcaraz conquers Melbourne, completes career Grand Slam

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UNION BUDGET 2026

...EYES A SIXER ON A SLIPPERY GLOBAL PITCH!

Infra, tech. data centres, defence, manufacturing take the spotlight, firms setting up data centres in India to get tax holiday till 2047.

RAILWAYS GET HIGHEST EVER ALLOCATION

The Budget has earmarked ₹2,77,830 crore for capital expenditure for the Ministry of Railways in FY27, a 10.25% increase over ₹2,52,000 crore in 2025–26 and the highest ever allocation. The funds will be used for new line construction, rolling stock procurement and infrastructure upgrades. In addition, ₹15,000 crore will be mobilised through extra budgetary resources.

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday presented a budget that leans on infrastructure expansion, a sharper domestic manufacturing push, easier tax compliance, a clearer AI and digital infrastructure strategy and a steady fiscal roadmap.

The government expects the economy to grow around 7% in the coming year while keeping the fiscal deficit at 4.3%. The document is framed around the government's three Kartavya philosophy, which places growth, competitiveness and inclusion at the centre of policy.

Presenting the Union Budget on Sunday, Sitharaman said the government recognises the need to enable critical infrastructure and attract investment.

"I propose to provide tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India," she said, adding, "It will, however, need to provide services to Indian customers through an Indian reseller entity. I also propose to provide a safe harbour of 15% on cost in case the company providing data centre services from India is a related entity."

Push to maintain growth momentum

Sitharaman used her Budget speech to lay out an unusually broad industrial playbook, targeting six priority areas to steady India's growth at a time when the global economic pitch looks increasingly uneven.

BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS

INCOME TAX

- More time to revise tax returns with payment of nominal fee
- People with ITR-1 and ITR-2 forms can file returns till July 31
- Non-audit business cases and trusts allowed to file returns till August 31
- People can update returns even after reassessment proceedings completed
- Proposal to rationalise prosecution framework in Income Tax Act

TAX

- TDS on sale of immovable property by NRI to be deducted by resident buyer
- Inter-cooperative society dividend income can be claimed as deduction under new tax regime

COMPANIES

Tax holiday till 2047 for foreign firms that provides cloud services by setting up data centres in India

Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation) to be restructured

'Corporate Mitras' to help MSMEs ensure regulatory compliance

Tax on buyback by all types of shareholders as capital gains

BANKING/INSURANCE

High-level committee on banking for 'Viksit Bharat'

Rs 2,000 crore top-up for Self-Reliant India Fund

SOCIAL WELFARE

25 crore people came out of multi-dimentional poverty in 10 years

Fish catch by Indian fishing vessel on high seas to be made free of duty

REVENUE/EXPENDITURE

Rs 1.4 lakh crore to states as Finance Commission grants

Debt to GDP ratio estimated at 55.6% of GDP in 2026-27 vs 56.1% in 2025-26

Fiscal deficit estimated at 4.3% of GDP for 2026-27

AGRI/ FARMERS

- Targeted effort to increase farmer income
- Inter-cooperative society dividend income can be claimed as deduction under new tax regime
- Support for animal husbandry through credit-linked subsidy programme
- Dedicated programme proposed for Indian cashew and cocoa

EDUCATION

- STEM education focussed on girl students

HEALTHCARE

- Rs 10,000 crore for 'Biopharma Shakti' for 5 years
- Create network of 1,000 accredited trial sites for biopharma
- Create network of 1,000 accredited trial sites for biopharma

RAILWAYS

- 7 high-speed rail corridors between cities as growth connectors

7 high-speed rail corridors to link growth cities

BENGALURU : The Central government on Sunday proposed to develop seven high-speed rail corridors across key urban and economic centres.These corridors will act as growth connectors, cutting travel time, reducing emissions, and supporting regional development, said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Union Budget 2026-27 speech. The proposed routes include Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi, and Varanasi-Siliguri.They will link India's financial hubs, technology centres, manufacturing clusters, and emerging cities with faster and cleaner mobility, said the Union Minister.

Proposed routes

Mumbai-Pune
Pune-Hyderabad
Hyderabad-Bengaluru
Hyderabad-Chennai
Chennai-Bengaluru
Delhi-Varanasi
Varanasi-Siliguri

State got nothing: CM

BENGALURU

Criticising the Union Budget 2025, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah dubbed it as a disappointing one, detrimental to the state's welfare.

"Not a single demand we raised in the pre-Budget meeting was fulfilled. Karnataka, one of the highest tax-paying states, received nothing in the Budget," he claimed.

Addressing the media here, the CM said the Centre continues to neglect Karnataka's interests. "Despite farmers' protests, the Budget did not even mention MSP (Minimum Support Price), which is a great betrayal to the farming community," he said.

"Every state except Andhra Pradesh and Bihar was neglected... despite the BJP-JD(S) alliance, Karnataka was still sidelined," he said and challenged BJP-JD(S) Parliamentarians and Union Ministers to question PM Modi on why Karnataka was ignored.

He claimed that Modi was punishing Karnataka for rejecting BJP in the 2023 Assembly Elections. "Even 46% of Karnataka voters who supported BJP in Lok Sabha elections are now suffering," he added.

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25th ANNUAL CONVOCATION
(Part-2)

President
Shri. Thaawarchand Gehlot
Hon'ble Governor of Karnataka and Chancellor of the University

Chief Guest and Convocation Address
Rear Admiral Vikram Menon, VSM
Flag Officer Commanding
Karnataka Naval Area (FOK)

Guest of Honour
Dr. M. C. Sudhakar
Hon'ble Minister of Higher Education,
Govt. of Karnataka and Pro-Chancellor of the University

Date : 02-02-2026 at 11:00 AM
Venue : Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Auditorium "Jnana Sangama", VTU, Belagavi

Congratulations to all PG and Research Degree Awardees

Prof. Ujwal U. J. Registrar (Evaluation)
Prof. Prasad B. Rampure Registrar
Prof. Vidyashankar S. Vice Chancellor

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ಶ್ರೀ ಸಿದ್ದರಾಮಯ್ಯ
ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ಕೌಶಲ್ಯಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ, ಉದ್ಯಮಶೀಲತೆ ಮತ್ತು ಜೀವನೋಪಾಯ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕೌಶಲ್ಯ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ನಿಗಮ (ಕೆ.ಎಸ್.ಡಿ.ಸಿ)

ಶ್ರೀ ಡಿ. ಕೆ. ಶಿವಕುಮಾರ್
ಮಾನ್ಯ ಉಪ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಗಳು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ

ವಿಜಯಪುರ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳ

"2ನೇ ಫೆಬ್ರವರಿ 2026"

ಮಾನ್ಯ ವೈದ್ಯಕೀಯ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ, ಕೌಶಲ್ಯಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ, ಉದ್ಯಮಶೀಲತೆ ಮತ್ತು ಜೀವನೋಪಾಯ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ಸಚಿವರಾದ ಡಾ.ಶರಣಪ್ರಕಾಶ ಆರ್. ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ಅವರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಬೃಹತ್ ಮತ್ತು ಮಧ್ಯಮ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಮೂಲಸೌಕರ್ಯ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಸಚಿವರಾದ ಡಾ. ಎಂ.ಬಿ. ಪಾಟೀಲ್ ಮತ್ತು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕೌಶಲ್ಯ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ನಿಗಮದ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರಾದ ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಶಿವಕಾಂತಮ್ಮ ನಾಯಕ (ಕಾಂತಾ) ಅವರು ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳ ಆಯೋಜನೆಯ ಕುರಿತು ಸಭೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಿರುವುದು

ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 9 ಗಂಟೆಯಿಂದ ಸಂಜೆ 5 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ
ದರಬಾರ ಹೈಸ್ಕೂಲ್ ಆವರಣ ಸ್ಟೇಷನ್ ರಸ್ತೆ, ವಿಜಯಪುರ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಮುಂದಾಳತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಯುವಕರಿಗೆ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲು ಮಹತ್ವದ ಹೆಜ್ಜೆ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ವಿದ್ಯಾವಂತ ನಿರುದ್ಯೋಗಿ ಯುವ ಜನತೆಗೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳು, ಸೇವಾ ಆಧಾರಿತ ಉದ್ಯಮಗಳ ಮೂಲಕ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸುವುದು. ನಿರುದ್ಯೋಗ ನಿರ್ಮೂಲನೆಯ ಸಂಕಲ್ಪ ಮತ್ತು ಯುವಜನತೆಯ ಉಜ್ವಲ ಭವಿಷ್ಯ ಈ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳದ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಉದ್ದೇಶ.

- ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಯಾವುದೇ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆಯ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾಕಾಂಕ್ಷಿಗಳು ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.
- ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್‌ನಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಂದಣಿ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳದ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾಕಾಂಕ್ಷಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸ್ಥಳದಲ್ಲೇ ನೇರ ನೋಂದಣಿಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.
- ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಕನಿಷ್ಠ ಹಾಗೂ ಗರಿಷ್ಠ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಹತೆಯುಳ್ಳ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೂ ಸಹ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾವಕಾಶವನ್ನು ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.
- ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣ ಡಿಜಿಟಲ್ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳ: ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾಕಾಂಕ್ಷಿಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಉದ್ಯೋಗದಾತರು ನೋಂದಣಿಯಿಂದ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಗೊಂಡು ಸಂದರ್ಶನಗಳನ್ನು ಒಳಗೊಂಡಂತೆ ಅಂತಿಮವಾಗಿ ಆಯ್ಕೆ ಪ್ರಕ್ರಿಯೆಯನ್ನು ಡಿಜಿಟಲ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ನಿರ್ವಹಿಸಲಾಗುವುದು.
- ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಲು ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾಕಾಂಕ್ಷಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಯಾವುದೇ ರೀತಿಯ ದರ ಅಥವಾ ಶುಲ್ಕವು ಇರುವುದಿಲ್ಲ.
- 200 ಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಕಂಪನಿಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ಉದ್ಯೋಗದಾತರು ಉದ್ಯೋಗಮೇಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಭಾಗಿ.

ಕೆಎಸ್‌ಡಿಸಿ ನಿಗಮದ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು/ಕಾರ್ಯಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳು

ಯುವನಿಧಿ ಪ್ಲಸ್ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮ । ಬೃಹತ್ ಮತ್ತು ಮಿನಿ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಮೇಳ । ನನ್ನ ವೃತ್ತಿ ನನ್ನ ಆಯ್ಕೆ
ಕಲಿಕೆ ಜೊತೆ ಕೌಶಲ್ಯ । ಅಂತರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ವಲಸೆ ಕೇಂದ್ರ-ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ (ವಿದೇಶೀ ಉದ್ಯೋಗಾವಕಾಶ) । ನಲ್ ಜಲ್ ಮಿತ್ರ

ಸಹಾಯವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: 9606494308

ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ಮೇಳದಲ್ಲಿ ನೋಂದಣಿಯಾಗಲು
https://udyogamela.ksdckarnataka.com/login ಗೆ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಿ

QUICK READ

Pottery Road bridge cracks after a year

Bengaluru

The Pottery Road railway bridge near Fraser Town has developed a major crack within a year of its construction. The barrier of the newly constructed flyover is being removed by hand and there is a danger of the bridge collapsing. Locals have expressed their anger over the unscientific work and demanded that it be repaired immediately. Recently, the public has questioned the cracks in the bridge, which was built in 2024, before the construction of the new bridge, there was a railway bridge which was about 120 years old.

Injustice in reservation, Bhovi stir in March

Bengaluru

Chitradurga Bhovi Peethadha president Immadi Siddarameshwara Swamiji said that a massive protest will be organized against the state government in March against the injustice done to the Bhovi, Banjara, Korama, Koracha and Alemari communities in the internal reservation classification of Scheduled Castes. He was speaking at the Siddarameshwara Jayanthyutsava and the inauguration ceremony of the Siddarameshwara Bhovi (Vaddara) Balaga organization held at Chakra Nagar in Andrahalli. Introducing internal reservation within internal reservation through the formula of Scheduled Caste Category 'C' is an injustice being done to the Scheduled Castes, should be rejected, he said.

Public angry over substandard road work

Bengaluru

A road collapsed near Agara lake. An autorickshaw was hit by a collapsed road and was completely damaged and the public has expressed their anger against the officials for the poor work. The sudden collapse of the asphalt road has caused surprise and anxiety among the locals. They have demanded officials to initiate action against the contractor responsible for this.

39 govt MBBS NRI seats go to non-NRI students for Rs 25L

On the one side, the government is accusing private institutions of exploiting students and now the government itself is indulging in it.

BENGALURU

A political and ethical storm has erupted in Karnataka over the state government's decision to open MBBS admissions in government medical colleges under the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) quota, a move that critics allege has resulted in affordable govt seats being effectively sold at a premium.

During NEET-2025 counselling, 57 MBBS seats were earmarked under the NRI category in government medical colleges. However, only 18 eligible NRI candidates took up these seats. The remaining 39 were subsequently allotted to non-NRI students at a steep NRI fee of Rs 25 lakh per year. The decision has triggered sharp criticism from political leaders and stakeholders in medical education, who argue that meritorious students are being priced out of govt institutions that are traditionally meant to offer affordable medical education.

The policy was announced in September 2025, when the state govt declared that 15% of seats in govt medical colleges would be reserved for NRIs at higher fees, a practice until then limited to private medical colleges. While a regular govt MBBS seat costs Rs 64,350 annually, an NRI quota seat carries a price tag of Rs 25 lakh per year. By comparison, NRI seats in private medical colleges in Karnataka cost up to Rs 45 lakh annually.

The government's stated objective behind the move was to make government medical colleges financially self-reliant and reduce dependence on state grants. However, the timing of the policy proved crucial. By the time the NRI quota was introduced, the seat matrix for the first round of counselling had already been finalised. As a result, the quota was applied only to 252 additional seats created across 10 government medical colleges, of which 57 fell under the NRI category.

Data from the Karnataka Examination Authority (KEA) shows that only 18 eligible NRI candidates applied and were allotted seats. As per rules, the remaining 39 seats were then offered to other eligible applicants in the non-NRI category who were willing to pay NRI fees, a move that sparked the controversy.

Domestic help rapes, kills elderly woman; then ends life

BENGALURU

A 65-year-old woman was allegedly raped and murdered at her home in KAS Colony, in BTM Layout second stage, near Silk Board. According to police, the suspect, a domestic help was later found dead by suicide inside the same house. The woman has been identified as Saritha, 65. The accused, Devaraju (50), was employed as a domestic help at her residence. Police said the crime occurred around midnight on Saturday and came to light in the early hours of Sunday, at about 4.30am, when Saritha's husband returned home from Dubai.

According to police, the husband rang the doorbell on arrival. Their 27-year-old daughter, who was asleep on the first floor, opened the door and returned to her room.

When the husband later entered the ground-floor bedroom, he found Saritha dead, while Devaraju was discovered hanging in the same room. Police said the daughter was unaware of the incident as she was on a different floor of the house at the time. After receiving information, personnel from the MICO Layout police station rushed to the spot and carried out a detailed inspection. Senior officials, including Deputy Commissioner of Police (South-East) MS Mohammad Sujeetha also visited the scene and gathered details. Both bodies were shifted to a mortuary for post-mortem examinations. MICO Layout police have registered a case and are continuing the investigation.

HC finds toll collection at Somanahalli toll plaza illegal

BENGALURU

The High Court has said that the collection of user fees at the Somanahalli toll plaza on Kanakapura Road is illegal and violates the National Highways Rules. It has also directed that free passes be issued to local residents within a month to facilitate smooth movement.

A single-member bench of Justice Suraj Govindaraj, which accepted the petition filed by the villagers of Somanahalli, Nelaguli and Kaggalipur, held that the establishment of a toll plaza on National Highway 209 violated the rules, ordering that such a facility should be 10 km away from the limits of a municipality or local city.

Further, levying toll without providing service road is a unilateral and unreasonable measure. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the toll plaza management company have been directed to issue free local resident passes within 30 days after verifying the residence of the applicant and all other residents who have applied for such passes, without levying any toll or user fee.

The bench said that if the court's directions are not followed, the respondents should immediately stop toll collection at Somanahalli and shift the toll plaza to another location as per the National Highways Toll (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008.

In the present case, the defendants, the toll companies, have implemented a user fee collection system without providing the necessary service roads to the citizens. Therefore, the court ruled that forcing the collection of tolls from the local residents would be unfair and oppressive.

Background of the case: The locals had requested the road development agency not to set up a toll plaza until the Kaggalipur, Taralu and Somanahalli gram panchayats provided service roads. Ignoring this, the new contractor had said that they would build infrastructure for toll collection. However, as no infrastructure was provided, Manjesh Kumar and other villagers approached the court in 2024.

During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioner had told the bench that Somanahalli village falls under the jurisdiction of the newly formed Greater Bangalore Authority (GBA) and the toll plaza falls under its jurisdiction. The distance between Somanahalli toll plaza and the next toll plaza is about 89 km, resulting in excessive toll being collected for the entire road.

BDA layout residents set to join GBA's democratic fold

BENGALURU

For residents of several long-neglected Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) layouts, the wait for democratic participation may finally be ending. With the govt initiating the handover of major BDA-developed layouts to the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and its constituent city corporations, residents will, for the first time, be able to hold GBA responsible for developmental works.

The move covers large residential pockets such as Banashankari 6th Stage, JP Nagar 8th and 9th Phases, Anjanapura Township, and Sir M Visvesvaraya Layout. For decades, these neighbourhoods remained under the administrative control of BDA, a planning body not designed for day-to-day civic governance. Residents say this administrative vacuum translated into crumbling roads, neglected civic amenity (CA) sites, and a complete lack of accountability. Finally, we will have an answerable administration, said Krishna Murthy, a BC resident of Jnanabharathi Layout. Echoing the sentiment, HK Gowdaiah, a resident of Sir M Visvesvaraya Layout, said, with GBA and the five city corporations, we are hoping for better administration and real benefits for citizens, he told. Urban governance experts pointed out that inclusion under GBA not only brings elected representation but also access to structured municipal budgets, ward committees, grievance redressal mechanisms, and legally enforceable service delivery norms.

For residents who lived for years without councillors, ward offices or a civic voice, GBA elections signal long-delayed recognition as full citizens of Bengaluru's governance system, with the promise that everyday civic issues may finally find a listening ear. The handover process from BDA to GBA will take about one or two months to finalise, after which these residents will be able to hold the GBA responsible for their civic needs, a BDA official said.

HC sets aside externment order against activist Timarodi

BENGALURU

The High Court has returned the order exiling Mahesh Shetty Timarodi, who had been campaigning in connection with the murder of a Belthangady student, to the Manvi police station in Raichur for nine months, to the Puttur AC, directing that the objections of the petitioner be considered and the legal process followed.

The bench, headed by Justice M Nagaprasanna, issued the order while hearing a petition challenging Timarodi's deportation from December 16, 2025, to September 16, 2026. The Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) had allegedly passed the order without considering objections filed after the show-cause notice, citing instances where the petitioner had been acquitted. The court directed that the objections be addressed within three weeks of receiving the order, after which a decision should be made as per the law.

Over 32 cases have been registered against Timarodi across various police stations. The Puttur SDO had stated that he was causing societal unrest by creating tension between communities. Timarodi challenged this deportation in the High Court, which initially cancelled the order and instructed the authorities to act according to law.

During the hearing, Timarodi's lawyers said he had held rallies seeking justice for the Belthangady student case and argued that the SDO's deportation order lacked proper reasoning and was malicious. They requested the High Court to quash the order.

'Human sensibility is lifeblood of cinema, not AI'

A discussion program titled 'The Invisible Art of Editing' was held at the Bangalore International Film Festival.

BENGALURU

No matter how much technology advances, artificial intelligence (AI) cannot provide the artistic intuition and emotional sensitivity required for editing in the field of cinema, said senior film editor Sreekar Prasad. He was speaking at the 'The Invisible Art of Editing' discussion organised at the 17th Bangalore International Film Festival. The event was hosted by producer Sandeep Vishwanath. While AI is a useful tool in terms of research and efficiency, compilation is fundamentally a process based on human instincts, experience and emotions, Prasad asserted.

Cinema is not just a sequence of scenes, it is the art of storytelling. It is the editor's responsibility to convey emotions to the audience and maintain the rhythm of the film, he explained.

He believes that the editor's work begins before the shooting begins. By discussing the first draft of the script with the director, it is possible to give the film visual clarity and narrative rhythm. During the shooting, the script changes based on the location, budget and the performance of the artists. Finally, the film takes a new shape on the editing table. To maintain objectivity in his work, he does not visit the set, revealed Sreekar Prasad.

It is helpful to watch the scenes like a normal audience and decide on their cinematography, without the difficulties or the influence of the environment on the set," he said. However, by carrying out the editing process within the first ten days of shooting, it is possible to correct any shortcomings in the film's tone or acting, he said.

Explaining the micro and macro editing stages in editing, he warned, sometimes scenes that seem amazing when viewed separately can hinder the pace of the entire film. In such cases, one must have the courage to remove those scenes. Even a small wrong scene can sever the emotional connection between the audience and the film.

Talking about Visual Effects (VFX), he said, "Technology should not overpower the story, but rather complement it. If it does not adapt to changing technology, it will lose relevance. No matter what changes, cinema will always remain an art form of human sensation.

They select good films at film festivals. So our film is also a good film. I am happy to have acted in this film, which has a storyline that upholds family values, said actor Ajith Hande.

HC upholds APMC's acquisition of 281 acres on Magadi Road

BENGALURU

The High Court has dismissed the appeals filed challenging the acquisition of land belonging to Jamnalal Bajaj Seva Trust on Magadi Road in Bengaluru North Taluk for the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee's (APMC) "Mega Market" project. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice C.M. Poonacha, which heard the appeal filed by the Seva Trust, dismissed the appeal and said that there were no errors in the judgment of the single-judge bench.

The delay in the acquisition process is mainly due to the stay orders obtained by the trust from various courts from time to time. The process took place within the legal time limit. The government's use of the 'emergency clause' to implement the market plan scientifically is legally binding.

The trust had already participated in meetings to decide the amount of compensation and had received compensation of about Rs 2.36 crore. The court said it was not right to question the acquisition of land by trying to return it ten years after receiving the money.

The government had withheld the remaining compensation money on the grounds that the trust had excess land. The court clarified that even though the trust won that case in 2022, it did not nullify the original land acquisition process.

Approximately 172 acres in the Srigandada Kavalu area of Yeshwantpur and 100 acres in Herohalli village were in the name of the Seva Trust. However, a notification was issued in 1994 to acquire the land in Sandalwood Kavalu for the establishment of a mega market and in 1999 to acquire the land in Herohalli.

GARDEN CITY FOR A REASON

Bengaluru blooms as India's flower capital

BENGALURU

Bengaluru may be globally recognised as India's technology hub, but the city also nurtures another identity—its role as the country's Flower City. With a long tradition of gardening, favourable climate, and thriving markets, Bengaluru has become a powerhouse in India's floriculture economy.

Flowers are woven deeply into the city's cultural and social fabric. From daily temple rituals to grand wedding celebrations, blooms grown in and around Bengaluru travel across the nation, adding colour and fragrance to countless occasions. The city's mild weather, fertile soil, and year round sunlight make it an ideal location for cultivating delicate varieties that require consistent conditions.

Farmers in Bengaluru and neighbouring districts such as Bengaluru Rural, Kolar, Chikkaballapur and Tumakuru produce roses, jasmine, marigolds, chrysanthemums, tuberoses, and orchids in large volumes. These flowers are supplied fresh to local markets each morning and quickly distributed to homes, temples, and event venues across Karnataka and beyond. Bengaluru's markets are among the busiest in South India, handling tonnes of flowers daily and serving as vital trading hubs for wholesalers and retailers.

The city's association with flowers dates back centuries. Iconic spaces like Lalbagh Botanical Garden played a pivotal role in promoting horticulture and plant research during the colonial era and after Independence. Over time, organised floriculture and modern nurseries expanded rapidly, cementing Bengaluru's reputation as a reliable centre for high quality flower production.

Beyond domestic demand, Bengaluru's floriculture sector has also tapped into international markets. High quality blooms are exported to regions including the Middle East, Europe, and Southeast Asia, strengthening the city's global footprint.

Situated on the elevated Deccan Plateau, Bengaluru enjoys cooler temperatures compared to many Indian cities. Combined with good soil and reliable water resources, these conditions allow farmers to cultivate flowers throughout the year. As a result, Bengaluru continues to thrive not only as India's Garden City but also as the nation's Flower Capital, powering a vibrant economy rooted in tradition and global trade.

Union Budget 2026 Poised to Boost Nature Tourism in Coastal & Western Ghats Karnataka

MANGALURU

The Union Budget 2026–27, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, has charted a forward-looking roadmap for tourism that dovetails with the natural bounty of India's coastal and biodiversity hotspots — a move that could significantly benefit Karnataka's coastal and Western Ghats regions, including Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada.

In her speech, Sitharaman underscored the potential of tourism as a major engine for job creation, foreign exchange earnings and local economic expansion. "The tourism sector has the potential to play a large role in employment generation, forex earnings and expanding the local economy," she said, announcing a slate of initiatives that marry sustainable travel with community development.

> The Union Budget 2026 places a strong emphasis on sustainable and nature-based tourism, laying the groundwork for eco-trails, coastal wildlife circuits and skill development. Experts say this will benefit Karnataka's coastal and Western Ghats districts — Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada — by creating jobs, preserving biodiversity and attracting global visitors.

A hallmark of the Budget is the focus on ecologically sustainable trails and nature-based travel infrastructure. The Finance Minister declared, "India has the potential and opportunity to offer world-class trekking and hiking experiences," and proposed development of ecologically sustainable mountain and nature trails in several regions, including the Western Ghats — a treasure trove of biodiversity also shared by Karnataka. Such trails will enhance trekking, hiking and wildlife tourism while ensuring minimal environmental impact.

Importantly for coastal Karnataka, the Budget envisions turtle trails along key nesting sites, including in Karnataka's coastal stretches, as well as bird-watching trails that can showcase the region's rich avian diversity. Conservationists welcome this, noting that "well-planned wildlife and nature circuits can balance ecological protection with sustainable livelihoods for locals."

The Budget also proposes a pilot programme to upskill 10,000 tourist guides in 20 iconic destinations in collaboration with premier institutes — a boost to service quality and employability in emerging eco-tourism hubs like Udupi and Uttara Kannada.

Environmentalists point out that this convergence of infrastructure, skill development and conservation in the national fiscal plan could catalyse nature tourism in Karnataka's unique landscapes while preserving its environment — a win-win for both ecology and economy.

Keep CNG supply regular- DC directs dealers

UDUPI

Udupi Deputy Commissioner Swaroopa T K has directed officials and gas distribution companies to immediately address CNG supply issues in the district, following complaints of motorists waiting for hours at CNG filling stations.

Chairing a review meeting at the DC's office at Rajathadri in Manipal the Deputy Commissioner said auto-rickshaw drivers and other CNG vehicle users were facing severe inconvenience due to inadequate supply and waiting periods of two to three hours. She instructed representatives of GAIL and ATGL to coordinate closely and ensure uninterrupted and smooth distribution of CNG in Udupi district.

With the number of CNG vehicles steadily rising, Swaroopa T K said infrastructure and logistics must be strengthened to meet growing demand. She also asked ATGL officials to take all necessary operational measures to supply CNG in proportion to consumer requirements.

The DC further directed that while loading CNG at the Mangaluru depot, priority should be given to supplies meant for Udupi district. She suggested introducing a fixed time schedule for filling to prevent delays and congestion.

Addressing the meeting, Udupi–Chikkamagalur MP Kota Srinivas Poojary said faulty CNG distribution had seriously affected auto drivers and other vehicle operators, with many forced to wait for hours, impacting their livelihoods.

He recalled that ATGL had earlier assured the commissioning of an additional station, which is yet to materialise. At present, 17 tankers transport CNG from Mangaluru, and increasing their number would help ensure smoother supply, he said.

Vehicle users raised concerns over long queues and low pressure during refuelling. Kundapur MLA Kiran Kumar Kodgi, ATGL representatives, auto-rickshaw drivers and others attended the meeting.

Captain Brijesh Chowta Lambasts Congress Government Over Escalating Drug Crisis

MANGALURU

In a scathing critique posted on X (formerly Twitter), Captain Brijesh Chowta, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member of Parliament from Dakshina Kannada, accused the Congress-led Karnataka state government of failing to address the growing menace of illegal drug manufacturing.

Chowta highlighted two recent high-profile drug busts, painting a picture of a state "slipping down a dangerous zone" under Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's leadership. His comments, which garnered significant attention online, underscore the intensifying political battle over law and order in Karnataka.

Chowta's post centered on the Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) raid on January 28, 2026, which uncovered a sophisticated mephedrone (MD) manufacturing unit in Mysuru—Siddaramaiah's home district. The NCB intercepted a Toyota Fortuner SUV, recovering approximately 35 kg of mephedrone, a banned synthetic stimulant, valued at around Rs.10 crore in the street market.

The operation led to the arrest of three individuals, including the alleged mastermind, Mahindra Kumar Vishnoi, a Surat resident with a prior criminal history in narcotics. Further investigation traced the drugs back to a clandestine lab in Mysuru's Hebbal Industrial Area, operating under the guise of a chemical cleaning facility rented by Vishnoi's relative.

The NCB sealed the unit and seized over 500 kg of precursor chemicals, Rs. 25.6 lakh in cash, and manufacturing equipment capable of producing large quantities of MD. Vishnoi, who reportedly learned drug production techniques while in prison on a previous charge, had set up the operation after being released on bail.

Chowta lambasted the state government for allowing such operations to thrive, stating, "They have failed to prevent

such illegal factories from finding safe haven in our state." He further criticized Home Minister G. Parameshwara for allegedly downplaying the incident by calling it a "phenyl factory" despite admissions from the accused.

Parameshwara's reported denial has fueled accusations of governmental negligence, with Chowta arguing it undermines rule of law and endangers Karnataka's youth.

Chowta connected the Mysuru incident to a similar operation just a month earlier, in December 2025, when the Maharashtra Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) raided three illegal drug manufacturing units in Bengaluru.

The ANTF claimed to have seized 21.4 kg of mephedrone (including 4.1 kg solid and 17 kg liquid), along with machinery and chemicals worth Rs. 55.88 crore, and arrested four suspects.

The units were disguised in locations like Spandana Layout Colony and Yerappanahalli, with drugs distributed across multiple states.

Chowta's critique emphasized this as evidence of systemic issues: "Their law & order machinery makes no effort to crack down on their growth and fearless run." He argued that the government's denial and inaction are "putting the future of our youth and whole state at stake."

Pillion rider dies as bike skids on NH-66

UDUPI

A 53-year-old woman died after the motorcycle she was travelling on skidded on National Highway 66 near Balaipade in Udyavara on Friday. The accident occurred around 1.40 pm when Rajath Acharya was riding from Katapady towards Udupi with his mother Bhagirathi as the pillion rider. Police said the bike was being ridden at high speed and in a rash manner. The rider lost control near Balaipade, throwing both onto the road. Bhagirathi suffered a severe head injury and was taken to hospital, where she was later declared dead. A case has been registered and investigation is underway.

Gujjarakere Water Declared Unfit for Drinking Again

MANGALURU

Laboratory analysis has once again confirmed that the water in Gujjarakere is heavily contaminated and completely unfit for drinking.

Once revered as a sacred pond believed to possess healing properties, Gujjarakere is now filled with harmful bacteria. Fresh test reports from the laboratory have reaffirmed that the water source is severely polluted.

Under the Smart City project, crores of rupees were spent on developing and beautifying the pond, giving it an attractive appearance from the outside. However, the water body itself remains intensely contaminated. The primary reason cited is the continuous inflow of sewage into the pond.

Local residents have repeatedly appealed to the city corporation and Smart City officials, yet no meaningful corrective measures have been reportedly taken so far.Samples collected from the pond revealed a total coliform count of 1,600 per 100 ml and a faecal coliform count of 1,600 per 100 ml — levels considered extremely hazardous. The laboratory report explicitly states that the water is unsafe for human consumption.

Seven months ago, similar tests on the pond water had already detected pollution,

Despite crores spent under the Smart City project for beautification, the water body remains heavily polluted with faecal contamination doubling in recent months; residents' repeated appeals to the corporation and Smart City authorities have yielded no effective action.

with a total coliform count of 1,600 and faecal coliform at 500 per 100 ml. The current figures show a sharp and alarming increase, particularly in faecal coliform levels, which have doubled.

Gujjarakere has undergone multiple water quality tests over the years, and each time the presence of dangerous bacteria has been confirmed. Tests conducted in 2014 and 2015 showed bacterial counts around 1,100, while repeated examinations in 2016 indicated a rising trend in contamination.

Water quality assessments typically measure total coliform bacteria (an indicator of overall water quality) and faecal coliform bacteria (a direct sign of contamination from sewage or human waste). For water to be considered safe and potable, the total coliform count should ideally be zero per 100 ml. Counts of 1–3 are deemed acceptable, 4–10 are poor, and anything above 10 renders the water unfit for drinking. Faecal coliform must be completely absent for safety. The present levels of 1,600 for both parameters are alarmingly high and far exceed permissible limits.

Residents continue to express concern over the deteriorating condition of the pond despite its cultural and historical significance, calling for urgent intervention to stop sewage inflow and restore the water quality.

MCC Launches Cleanliness Drive at Kadri Park During Street Food Festival

MANGALURU

Mangaluru City Corporation carried out a dedicated cleanliness drive at Kadri Park amid the ongoing street food festival as part of Karavali Utsav.

Late on Friday night, MCC officials along with sanitation workers cleared garbage accumulated on both sides of the road at Kadri Park, where the food festival is currently taking place. The effort focused on removing roadside waste to maintain hygiene in the busy event area.

In a post shared by the Mangaluru City Corporation's official handle, the civic body emphasized its priority: "Green and clean festival is our priority."The drive was conducted while the three-day street food festival — running from January 30 to February 1, 2026 — continued to attract crowds with a variety of local and popular food stalls operating in the evenings.

City's Kendriya Vidyalaya Among Elite 'Sterling Schools' in National Green Audit

MANGALURU

PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya No. 2 in Mangaluru has secured the coveted 'Sterling School' designation from the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) under its flagship Green Schools Programme.

The recognition follows a thorough Green School Audit that evaluated the institution's long-term dedication to eco-friendly practices. This marks the fifth consecutive year the school has achieved Green School status, demonstrating unwavering commitment to environmental responsibility.

For the 2025–26 academic year, only two schools across Karnataka were selected for the Sterling School title, with PM SHRI KV No. 2 Mangaluru being one of them. At the national level, just two Kendriya Vidyalayas received the award—the other being Kendriya Vidyalaya Narela in West Delhi.

CSE highlighted several standout efforts that contributed to the honour, including effective solid waste management and composting systems, robust rainwater harvesting infrastructure, measures to reduce energy consumption, and regular cleanliness campaigns across the campus.

Special credit was given to the school's leadership team—Principal Jaswinderlal, Green School Coordinator Sujatha U. Nair—and the enthusiastic student Green Team, whose active involvement has driven many of the successful initiatives.

The award was formally presented by CSE Director General Sunita Narain during a ceremony at the Stein Auditorium in New Delhi on January 30.

The Green Schools Programme assesses institutions across critical areas: air quality, energy use, food practices, water conservation, waste handling, and sanitation. The audit process encourages schools to embed sustainable habits into daily routines and foster environmental consciousness among students and staff.

School officials expressed pride in the achievement and said it would further motivate everyone on campus to deepen their focus on sustainability and inspire the next generation to adopt responsible environmental behaviour.

Traffic Police Conducts Road Safety Awareness Session for Auto-Rickshaw Drivers

MANGALURU

In a continued effort to enhance road safety and reduce accidents involving vulnerable road users, the Mangaluru City Traffic Police organized a targeted awareness session for auto-rickshaw drivers at the KC Road rickshaw stand.

Led by ASI Sadananda Gowda, the interactive program focused on essential aspects of safe driving, strict compliance with traffic rules, and responsible road behavior. The session also highlighted key emergency helplines, including 112 for general emergencies and 1930 for reporting cyber fraud incidents, underscoring a broader commitment to public safety and crime prevention.

The event took place at a busy urban transport hub, where auto-rickshaws serve as a critical mode of public transport for thousands of residents daily.

This initiative comes against the backdrop of alarming road accident statistics in Mangaluru for 2025. According to data released by Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime and Traffic) K. Ravishankar, the City Police Commissionerate recorded 1,014 road accidents, resulting in 171 deaths and 1,213 injuries.

These figures represent a slight improvement in fatalities compared to 2024 (178 deaths in 1,026 accidents), but highlight the persistent risks, particularly for two-wheeler riders and pedestrians—who accounted for a significant portion of victims.

Ramakrishna Mission – Swachh Mangaluru Drive Kicks Off February Cleanliness Campaign

MANGALURU

The Ramakrishna Mission – Swachh Mangaluru Abhiyan officially launched its February cleanliness drive with a programme at Kankanady Old Road.

The event was inaugurated by Father Muller Medical College Hospital Administrator Fr. George Jeevan Sequeira and Dakshina Kannada Additional Superintendent of Police Anil Kumar S. Bhoomareddy.

Addressing the gathering, Fr. George Jeevan Sequeira observed that even educated individuals sometimes overlook simple responsibilities like avoiding plastic use. He stressed the need for continuous awareness to reduce plastic consumption and commended the Ramakrishna Mission for its sustained efforts in fostering public cleanliness consciousness.

Additional SP Anil Kumar S. Bhoomareddy described Swachh Mangaluru as a beautiful and value-driven concept that reflects the principle of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' — the world is one family. He questioned why society does not gratefully serve nature, which provides everything, and called upon youth to actively participate in such drives.

As part of the activities, a team led by Nitte Physiotherapy College Principal Dr.Dhanesh Kumar, along with Dr.Jayesh Chandran, Dr. Rakesh Krishna, Dr. Arun Varghese, and their students, cleaned the elevated road connecting to Father Muller Hospital. They removed substantial plastic waste, cut overgrown vegetation, and cleared unauthorised banners.

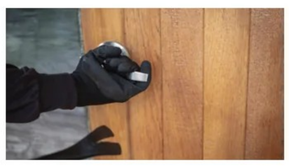
Simultaneously, senior volunteers cleaned the lower road leading to Pumpwell. They cleared plastic litter, removed fallen tree branches obstructing traffic, and descended into drains to extract accumulated waste.Students from St. Joseph Engineering College enthusiastically joined the effort.

QUICK READ

District In-Charge Minister schedules Vijayapura visit

Vijayapura

Dr. M.B. Patil, Minister of Industry and Infrastructure Development and District In-Charge Minister, will visit Vijayapura district on February 2 to attend several programs. The minister will take part in the inaugural ceremony of a job fair organized by the Department of Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihoods, along with the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation, at Darbara High School at 10:30 am. After attending the program, Dr. Patil is scheduled to depart for Bangalore by road at 11:30 am. Officials announced that the visit aims to strengthen skill development initiatives and connect with local stakeholders in the district.



Thieves target lawyer's house, steal documents

Vittal

Thieves broke into the house of Advocate Safia Naufal near Royal Villa in Okkettur, Vittal, and stole important documents. The family has been abroad for a month, leaving the house empty. The intruders forced open the front door and searched through cupboards but found only some legal papers to take. Neighbors noticed the open door and immediately informed the family. Police have been alerted, and an investigation is underway to identify the culprits. Authorities are examining the scene for evidence and reviewing security measures in the area to prevent similar incidents in the future.

CM slams Union Budget 2026 as disappointing, short-sighted

CM warned South India is again denied its development share, saying such neglect could widen disparities and harm balanced national growth

KALABURAGI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah strongly criticised the Union Budget 2026 during a press conference in Kalaburagi, describing it as "disappointing and short-sighted." Presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the budget, he said, fails to meet the needs of states and appears more focused on political appeasement than genuine development.

Siddaramaiah questioned the budget's relevance for Karnataka, saying the state has been largely ignored. "What has the Union Budget actually provided for Karnataka?" he asked, highlighting the absence of significant projects or fund allocations for the state's growth.

He also raised concerns about the broader southern region, pointing out that South India has once again been denied its fair share in national development. The Chief Minister warned that such neglect could widen regional disparities and affect

balanced growth across the country.

Urging the central government to reconsider its approach, Siddaramaiah called for future budgets to be more inclusive, with resources distributed equitably among all states. He emphasized that a fair and thoughtful allocation of funds is essential to ensure overall national progress.

The Chief Minister's comments drew attention to the perceived imbalance in the current budget and sparked discussions on the need for stronger advocacy for regional interests. He stressed that inclusive planning is crucial for sustaining development and promoting unity across India.

He said proposals create youth opportunities, boost sports development, and focus on women's empowerment for social and economic progress

Vijayendra hails budget as vision for growth

SHIVAMOGGA

BJP State President and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra said the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman reflects the Prime Minister's vision of building a developed India. Speaking to the media after watching the budget presentation, he described it as forward-looking and inclusive.

Vijayendra said the budget is based on the idea of strengthening production, meeting people's aspirations, and ensuring growth for all. He noted that several schemes have been announced to help double farmers' income and boost sectors such as industry, tourism, information technology, and biotechnology. According to him, the budget gives equal importance to all major areas of development.

He also said the proposals support youth through new opportunities and programs, including a stronger push for sports development. Special attention has been given to empowering women, he added, calling it a positive step for social and economic progress.

Highlighting another key point, Vijayendra said the budget avoids imposing new taxes while still focusing on development. He praised it as a balanced financial plan that will help India grow stronger economically and move closer to becoming a global leader.

He claimed that farmers, women, youth, and the poor across the country are welcoming the budget. Calling it a people-friendly document, he said it lays a strong foundation for long-term progress.

When asked about the impact on Karnataka, Vijayendra said he would speak in detail later. He also criticised the state government, saying constant criticism of the Centre has become its main approach instead of focusing on development.

Union Budget brings hope for coastal development: Kamath

MANGALURU

Mangaluru MLA D. Vedavyas Kamath has welcomed the Union Budget 2026, calling it a visionary roadmap for India's growth. Presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the budget focuses on inclusive development and economic resilience.

Kamath highlighted the "Three Duties" framework aimed at empowering farmers, youth, women, backward classes, and all regions through sustainable reforms. A key initiative is the introduction of artificial intelligence tools to support farmers and improve agricultural productivity. Special focus has been given to coconut, cashew, and sandalwood cultivation in coastal areas. The budget also proposes the construction of 500 reservoirs for drinking water, irrigation, and agriculture, along with a fisheries value-addition scheme to benefit fishermen. Coastal infrastructure will be strengthened through new trucking routes and a coastal freight scheme, boosting tourism, trade, and the regional economy.

Preparation underway for Vijayapura job fair

VIJAYAPURA

Officials emphasized conducting the fair systematically, issuing clear directions to ensure smooth registration, proper guidance, and easy movement of candidates during interviews

Senior officials reviewed preparations for the job fair scheduled on February 2 at a city school premises in Vijayapura on Sunday. The employment fair will be held under the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation to provide opportunities for local youth and job seekers.

Corporation Chairman Mrs. Kanta Nayaka, Managing Director R. Mesinil, District Collector Dr. Ananda K., and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Rishi Anand visited the venue and inspected arrangements in detail. They examined the main platform, interview rooms, registration counters, and basic facilities planned for candidates.

Officials stressed that the fair must be conducted in a systematic manner to avoid confusion among participants. Clear directions were given to ensure smooth registration, proper guidance, and easy movement of candidates during interviews.

The team instructed departments to provide drinking water, seating, power supply, and other essential amenities. Authorities were asked to work together closely so that the event is successful and beneficial to all attendees.

Several officials including Joint Director Supriya Bellary, Tehsildar Prasanta Changanoda, Civil Supplies Deputy Director Vinayakumar Patil, Horticulture Deputy Director Rahula Bhavidoddi, NIC Officer Sivananda Googavada, and Municipal Commissioner Mahaveera Borannavar were present.

District Skill Development Officers Gurupadaiah Hiremath, Mahesh Malwadkara, and other staff members also attended the inspection to ensure smooth conduct.

C.T. Ravi chosen unopposed as DCC Bank Chief

CHIKKAMAGALURU

Member of the Legislative Council C.T. Ravi has been elected unopposed as the Chairman of the Chikkamagaluru District Central Cooperative (DCC) Bank. The election for the chairman and vice chairman posts.

Dinesh Hosur from Koppa taluk was elected as the Vice Chairman. Supporters of BJP and JDS celebrated the victory outside the DCC Bank office. Bank staff and party workers congratulated both newly elected leaders.

In the recent DCC Bank director elections, several well-known political figures had contested. Out of the total director seats, eight were elected unopposed, while polls were conducted for the remaining seats. BJP secured a majority of the positions, while JDS also gained representation. Congress, despite having elected representatives in the district, failed to win seats in the bank's board.

The contest had drawn wide attention in the district, with leaders from different parties treating it like a major political battle. The alliance between BJP and JDS played a key role in the outcome, observers said.

After his election, Ravi thanked members for their support and promised to work for the development of the cooperative banking sector. He said DCC Banks play an important role in supporting farmers, small traders, and rural communities through financial services.

Leaders expressed hope that the new team would strengthen the bank's services and improve support for agriculture and local businesses. The election results are being seen as politically significant in the district's cooperative sector.

Union Budget seen as big economic boost

BIDAR

BJP State Secretary and Bidar South MLA Dr. Shailendra Beldale said the Union Budget will strengthen the nation's economy and benefit people from all sections of society. He described the budget as one that builds trust and promotes growth under the vision of "Sab Ka Sath, Sab Ka Vikas."

Speaking to reporters, he said the budget reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of building a self-reliant and globally respected India. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's proposals, he said, mark the beginning of a new phase of economic progress. Special focus has been given to the poor, youth, farmers, women, and backward communities.

Dr. Beldale welcomed the plan to establish a hostel for girl students in every district, calling it a major step toward improving education for young women. He also appreciated the push for using homegrown technology and the long-term plans to strengthen key sectors, including defence and energy, through nuclear power projects.

He said public health has received strong attention in the budget. The reduction in prices of medicines for 17 serious diseases, including cancer and diabetes, will bring relief to many families. Plans for new high-speed railway lines, including the Hyderabad–Bengaluru route, will improve travel and help regional development.

According to him, the budget supports agriculture, industry, education, defence, information technology, and both urban and rural growth. He said the Centre's vision for a strong and developed India is clearly visible in these announcements.

Dr. Beldale added that several people-friendly schemes have created fresh hope among citizens. He expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister for presenting what he called a forward-looking and inclusive budget for the nation.

Union Budget 2026 lays foundation for growth: Kudiganur

VIJAYAPURA

The Union Budget for 2026 has been described as historic and visionary, setting a strong foundation for a developed India. Vijaykumar Kudiganur, BJP State Coordinator, said the budget reflects the government's vision of making India a Vishwaguru, or global leader, in the near future.

The budget introduced major tax changes, including increased duties on liquor and tobacco products, while providing relief by exempting 12 essential cancer medicines from taxes. Import duties on solar power equipment and electric vehicle batteries have been removed, giving a boost to renewable energy and green mobility. Financial support has also been announced to help women start grocery businesses, promoting entrepreneurship.

Infrastructure and education received special attention. New sports complexes will be built to enhance international-level training, and a girls' hostel will be constructed in every district to improve education and safety. Tax exemptions on accident insurance and targeted schemes for persons with disabilities were also included.

The government has allocated ₹5,000 crore for urban development, ₹10,000 crore to support small industries, and ₹40,000 crore for semiconductor projects. High-speed rail corridors will connect Bengaluru with Hyderabad and Chennai. Experts said the budget lays the groundwork for innovation, economic growth, and employment. Citizens have welcomed Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's ninth consecutive budget as a step forward in India's progress.

Machideva remembered as symbol of social cleanliness

SHIVAMOGGA

MLA S.N. Channabasappa said Madiwala Machideva was not only known for washing clothes but also for cleansing society of injustice and inequality. He spoke at the Madiwala Machideva Jayanti programme held at Kuvempu Theatre in the city on Sunday. The event was organised by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Mahanagara Corporation, Department of Kannada and Culture, and District Madiwala Samaj Sangh. Channabasappa said Machideva stood against untouchability and social discrimination during the 12th century and worked for equality among people. He added that the lives of such great reformers should be included in school textbooks.

Teacher Nagaraja A.M. said Machideva believed that true reform begins with changing people's minds. Born in Hipparagi, Machideva wrote hundreds of vachanas in simple language that common people could understand. He stressed dignity of labour and placed work, or kayaka, above all.

Speakers recalled that Guru Mallikarjuna Swamy guided Machideva's learning at a time when lower castes were denied education. Basavanna and other Sharans praised his courage and knowledge. Machideva is also remembered for protecting vachana literature during difficult times.

Community leaders said the Madiwala community has long contributed to society through honest service. They urged the government to give the community better recognition and include Machideva's history in education.

Officials and leaders present said such programmes help younger generations learn about social reformers who fought for equality, justice, and human dignity. They encouraged parents to educate children and follow Machideva's ideals in daily life for a more equal society.

SAINT'S LEGACY HONOURED

MLA leads tribute to social reformer Sri Madiwala Machideva

BIDAR

Bidar Dakshin Constituency MLA Dr Shailendra Beldale led a special tribute program honoring Sri Madiwala Machideva, a 12th-century social reformer and poet, at a public gathering attended by community leaders, villagers, and local citizens. The MLA offered floral tributes and spoke about the lasting importance of Machideva's teachings.

Dr Beldale urged everyone to embrace the principles of equality and justice that Machideva championed throughout his life. He highlighted how the great Madiwala saint used

poetry and verses to raise his voice against social inequalities and dedicated his life to promoting human values. "His words remain a guiding light for society even today," said Dr Beldale, encouraging citizens to follow Machideva's message in daily life.

The program attracted a large number of people from various villages in the constituency, reflecting the enduring respect and admiration for Machideva's contributions. Community leaders and villagers actively participated in the event, sharing their experiences and expressing gratitude for the teachings that continue to influence generations.

Nagesh Sidda, Media Coordinator of Bidar South Constituency, said that such initiatives strengthen social harmony and inspire youth to adopt values of equality, compassion, and fairness. The program concluded with prayers and community participation, reaffirming Machideva's timeless legacy as a symbol of justice and moral courage.

QUICK READ

Woman dies after falling from bike

Udupi

A 53-year-old woman lost her life after falling from a moving motorcycle on National Highway 66 in Udupi. The deceased was identified as Bhagiri Rathi. She was riding pillion on a bike driven by her son, Rajat Acharya, who was travelling towards Udupi. Near Kinnimulki, the bike reportedly skidded and fell on the road. Bhagiri Rathi suffered serious injuries in the fall. She was rushed to the district hospital for treatment, but doctors declared her dead on arrival. Udupi traffic police have registered a case and are investigating the cause of the accident thoroughly now.

'Union Budget aims for developed, self-reliant India'

Kolar

The Union Budget 2026-27, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, focuses on building a developed and self-reliant India, the budget emphasizes both economic and social development, aiming to boost investment across various sectors, BJP district president Omshakti Chalapati said welcoming the budget. It supports financial growth, promotes tourism, and benefits fishermen, he added. He described the budget as a forward-looking plan that aligns with the Prime Minister's vision for national progress. Chalapati expressed confidence that the proposed measures will strengthen infrastructure, create opportunities, and contribute to overall development across the country.

Duradundeswara Math provides education, service continuously

Jarakiholi praised the Math's educational efforts, urged parental support, balanced studies and sports, stressing discipline and education for success

GHATAPRABHA

The Arabhavi Shri Duradundeswara Math, with a history of over 400 years, continues its social, religious, educational, and Dasoha services, said Satish Jarakiholi, State Public Works and District In-Charge Minister. He spoke at the inauguration of the Math's newly constructed high school and PU College building, which was started 50 years ago to improve education in the area.

Jarakiholi appreciated the Math for its ongoing efforts in guiding students and supporting quality education. He urged parents to pay attention to their children's studies and encouraged students to balance academics with sports. He emphasized that education and discipline are key to success, citing role models like Ramoji Rao who achieved greatness through hard work and education.

Shri Gurubasavalinga Mahaswamy of the Math highlighted the importance of combining education with values and said the Math has been a continuous center for Dasoha and social service, even sheltering freedom fighter Sindhur Lakshmana. He noted the Math's long legacy, with devotees including Raja Malasarja and the Sangli Peshwas, and praised alumni who contribute to its development today. Bailahongala MLA Mahantesh Kaujalagi and Kittoor MLA Babasaheb Patila lauded the Math for providing quality education at affordable fees, equipping students in rural areas to compete with global standards.

The program was attended by officials, alumni, teachers, staff, and community leaders. Deputy Director P. Aya Bhandari explained Chikkodi PU education, while retired principal S. Vhi Nayak shared details of the institution's achievements. Cultural performances, prayers, and alumni tributes were part of the program organized in association with the SDT Alumni Association, reflecting the Math's continued commitment to education, service, and community development.

MLA Raghumurthy urges youth to grab opportunities

Officials reported 6,248 candidates registered for the fair, with 86 companies participating; 145 received appointment letters, 180 advanced, and six differently-abled candidates secured jobs

CHITRADURGA

Challakere MLA T. Raghumurthy advised young job seekers to make full use of opportunities and said willpower is the first step toward employment. He spoke after inaugurating a district-level job fair at Government Arts College, organised by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Skill Development Department.

He said unemployment among educated youth is rising and job fairs offer a valuable platform. While the government provides temporary support like the Yuvanidhi allowance, he urged youth not to depend on it and instead seek stable careers. He added that beginners may face low salaries at first but should stay patient, disciplined, and hardworking.

Officials said 6,248 candidates registered for the fair. More than 86 companies from sectors such as technology, pharma, banking, insurance, and marketing took part. By noon, interviews of 575 candidates were completed, with 145 receiving appointment letters on the spot. Another 180 moved to the next round. Six differently-abled candidates also secured jobs.

Arrangements included over 25 interview rooms and special help desks to guide applicants. Companies displayed job roles and required qualifications outside each room.

Speakers shared success stories, including Sharath from Holalkere, who got a job through last year's fair and now works with SBI Life Insurance, earning ₹80,000 per month. He returned this year as an interviewer.

Leaders said such job fairs not only connect youth with employers but also build confidence and skills. MLA Raghumurthy encouraged candidates to keep trying and treat every interview as a learning step toward success.

Class eight students appear for NMMS exam

CHALLAKERE

Class 8 students in Challakere appeared for the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) examination at three centres on Sunday. The exam aims to identify meritorious students from economically weaker sections and support them in continuing their education.

Block Education Officer K.S. Suresh said the NMMS is meant for Class 8 students, and those who qualify will receive scholarships from Class 9 to Class 12. Selected students are eligible for financial assistance of ₹12,000 per year to meet educational expenses.

He said the scheme plays a crucial role in reducing dropout rates after Class 8 by supporting students facing financial constraints. Students and parents expressed hope and confidence in the scheme. Eligibility requires at least 55% marks in Class 7 and parental income below ₹3.5 lakh.

Online bookings are open; KSTDC says Chitradurga tourism boosts local jobs, trade, and heritage preservation for future generations

KSTDC launches Chitradurga tour after MLA efforts

CHITRADURGA

Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) has introduced a new one-day tour package from Bengaluru to historic Chitradurga, a move locals say became possible due to efforts of Chitradurga MLA K.C. Virendra Pappi. The package aims to promote the region's rich history, forts, and cultural heritage.

Officials said the idea gained momentum after the MLA raised the demand in the Assembly, highlighting Chitradurga's importance as "Kote Nadu," land of forts and heroic legends. Following the request, KSTDC scheduled regular weekly trips, and seven tours have already been completed with encouraging response from visitors. Tourists have praised the massive Chitradurga Fort, ancient sites, and the local traditions that reflect Karnataka's past.

Under the package, a comfortable bus leaves Bengaluru at 6 a.m. and reaches Chitradurga in the morning. The itinerary includes visits to Chitradurga Fort, Chandravalli caves, and the memorial of former Chief Minister S. Nijalingappa.

After sightseeing, the bus departs at 5 p.m. and returns to Bengaluru by 10 p.m. The ticket price is ₹1,073 per person, which covers travel and guide services.

Bookings are currently available online, and officials said more trips could be added if demand rises. KSTDC Managing Director Prashant Kumar Mishra said promoting destinations like Chitradurga not only boosts tourism but also supports local jobs, trade, and small businesses. Residents hope the new service will bring wider recognition to their historic town and help preserve its heritage for future generations.

Officials added that the tour runs from Thursday to Sunday each week, and seats are filled based on advance reservations. Positive feedback from early travellers has encouraged authorities to consider expanding similar heritage circuits across districts.

Neglected hostel puts students' education at risk

CHALLAKERE

The Madiwala Machideva Hostel on Ballari Road in Challakere town is lying in ruins due to years of neglect. Built nearly twenty years ago to support students from rural and poor families, the hostel now lacks basic facilities. During rains, water leaks through the roof, making rooms unsafe and unlivable. Once filled with students, the building now stands empty, with locked rooms and insects inside. Students say the place is unsafe and unhealthy to stay. The situation reflects social injustice. Authorities must act quickly to repair the hostel and protect students' future and ensure safe education opportunities for coming generations.

Lizard in school meal sickens fourteen children

YELABURGA

More than fourteen students from a government higher primary school in Chikkabannigol village of Koppal district fell ill after a lizard reportedly fell into the hot midday meal served. The incident came to light after children returned home complaining of stomach pain, vomiting, and loose motion, which alarmed parents.

According to villagers, the children later said a lizard had been found in the food prepared under the school's midday meal scheme. Angry parents gathered near the school and questioned the headmaster and kitchen staff over food safety and supervision. Some parents also alleged that students were told not to inform their families about the incident.

A medical team from the Vajrabandi Primary Health Centre rushed to the village and examined the affected students. Fourteen children who showed stronger symptoms were shifted to the government hospital in Yelaburga for treatment. Doctors said the children responded well to care and are now out of danger.

Education department officials, including the Akshara Dasoha officer and Block Resource Coordinator, visited the school and inspected the kitchen and storage area. They collected details about how the meal was prepared and served.

Block Education Officer Ashok Gowdar said the contaminated rice was thrown away as soon as the lizard was noticed and fresh food was cooked for the students. He added that all children were admitted for tests as a precaution. A report has been sent to higher authorities, and action is expected against those found responsible.

Parents have demanded strict monitoring of school kitchens and inspections to prevent such incidents. They said children's health and trust in the scheme must be protected.

Versatile artist Lokesh receives honorary doctorate

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Renowned artist Lokesh from Chikkaballapur has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the Asia International Culture Research University, recognizing his outstanding contributions to art and culture. The honor celebrates his dedication to preserving heritage and inspiring young learners in the region.

Lokesh has been painting for nearly thirty years, selflessly sharing his skills with children and the community. His work spans multiple disciplines—he is not only a painter but also a photographer, short film director, writer, actor, and conversationalist. Through his diverse talents, he has actively engaged with society, promoting art and human values. He has received numerous awards from taluk, district, and state organizations, reflecting decades of committed service. Colleagues and students said that this recognition adds both responsibility and motivation, encouraging him to continue nurturing future artists.

Speaking at the ceremony, Lokesh emphasized that achievement comes from passion and dedication. Friends, family, and students congratulated him, praising his relentless pursuit of excellence and his contributions to cultural growth in the district. The honorary doctorate is seen not only as a personal achievement but also as a symbol of encouragement for other artists.

Pradeep Kumar chosen unopposed as RUPSA President

TUMAKURU

Educationist N.B. Pradeep Kumar Rupsa has been elected unopposed as the new District President of the Recognized Unaided Private Schools Association (RUPSA) in Tumakuru. He is also a secretary of the Vidyavahini Group of Educational Institutions.

His selection was made during a recent district-level meeting of the association. Members said his achievements in the education field, leadership qualities, and strong support for private educational institutions led to unanimous approval of his name.

Pradeep Kumar is already serving as RUPSA State Vice President and is known across Karnataka for speaking firmly on issues faced by private unaided schools. He has often raised concerns about teachers' dignity and safety, quality education for students, and overall development of the education sector. After being elected, he said education is more than textbooks. "It shapes discipline, values, humanity, and nation-building," he said. He added that private schools play a key role in developing the country's human resources. Protecting the rights of private institutions, ensuring respect for teachers, and securing students' futures will remain top priorities.

He promised to strengthen unity among private schools in Tumakuru district and act as a strong voice for teachers, institutions, and students. He also assured coordination with the government to solve problems in the education sector and work toward making the district a model in education.

Many school heads, teachers, RUPSA members, and education supporters welcomed his appointment and extended congratulations.

The new district office-bearers include Srinivas as Secretary, Nayaz Ahmed as Vice President, T. Chandrashekar as Treasurer, and Nikhil Mirji and Amit B.M. as Joint Secretaries. Leaders expressed confidence that the new team will bring fresh energy and direction to private education in the district.

ANCIENT WISDOM REVIVED

Scholar highlights Machideva's role in social reform

CHITRADURGA

Historian and professor Dr. N.S. Mahantesh said 12th-century Sharan Madiwala Machideva was not just a spiritual figure but also a strong protector of the Sharana movement and Vachana literature. He spoke at the Madiwala Machidevaru Jayanti celebration held at the City Collector's Office Hall on Sunday.

The event was organised by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Department of Kannada and Culture, and the Municipal Council. Dr. Mahantesh said Machideva believed in action and reason, not blind faith. He studied Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, and Agamas in a practical way and explained their value to society. This helped create awareness and social change during his time.

Quoting Basavanna, he said Machideva was praised as someone who washed away ignorance from people's minds, not just clothes. His fearless nature and strong commitment to his work, or kayaka, made him stand out in the Sharana movement. He was honoured with the titles "Veera" and "Deva," a rare recognition.

District Guarantee Planning Authority President R. Shivanna Ganjigatte said the Madiwala community's service to society is admirable. He noted that today the community is moving beyond traditional work and becoming entrepreneurs with support from government schemes.

Several officials, community leaders, and members attended the programme. Speakers said Machideva's life teaches dignity of labour, courage, and social equality, values that remain important in modern society. Cultural performances marked the celebration, and participants called for preserving the teachings of the Vachana saints for future generations.

QUICK READ

KCR reaches Hyderabad ahead of SIT examination

HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao reached his residence in Hyderabad on Sunday ahead of his examination by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in the telephone-tapping case. KCR, as the BRS chief is popularly known, will be questioned by SIT officials at 3 p.m. on Sunday at his residence in Nandi Nagar in Banjara Hills. Police have tightened security around KCR's house. Barricades have been erected to stop any gathering near the house. Only KCR's family members were being allowed into the house.

PM's 'Reform Express' to drive Viksit Bharat: Rijiju

NEW DELHI

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Sunday described the upcoming Union Budget 2026-27 as a destination of the Reform Express driven by the Prime Minister's vision of a Viksit Bharat. Rijiju said, The Reform Express is moving forward very smoothly, and today we will see a glimpse of it. This budget is for the whole country; people will see and listen, it is for everyone's betterment. Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan echoed the sentiment, saying, This is the budget for a Viksit Bharat and an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Leaders voice high hopes, expect focus on farmers, women

NEW DELHI

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to present the Union Budget 2026-27 in Parliament on Sunday, political leaders from across states have expressed optimism that the budget will prioritise farmers, women and other sections of society, while also giving fresh momentum to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, speaking to reporters, said, The Union Budget is being presented in Parliament today.

Mamata to meet CEC amid escalating SIR row

'The primary focus of her trip will be the SIR exercise currently underway in West Bengal, which the TMC has strongly opposed'

KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is scheduled to meet Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar at the headquarters of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in New Delhi on Monday, a meeting that is expected to be contentious given the growing political controversy surrounding the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state.

Banerjee will depart for the national capital on Sunday afternoon and has multiple engagements lined up during her visit. According to party sources, the primary focus of her trip will be the SIR exercise currently underway in West Bengal, which the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leadership has strongly opposed. In addition to her meeting with the Chief Election Commissioner, Banerjee is also expected to hold discussions with senior leaders of various opposition parties in an effort to build a broader consensus against the revision process.

Party insiders said the timing of the visit was chosen deliberately, as leaders from across the opposition spectrum are in New Delhi for the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament. The TMC believes this provides an opportunity to amplify its concerns at the national level and present the issue as one with wider implications for electoral fairness and federal principles.

While the exact date of Banerjee's return to Kolkata has not yet been finalized, TMC leaders indicated that she is likely to return before February 5. On that day, a vote on account is scheduled to be presented in the West Bengal Assembly, making her presence in the state politically essential.

The budget session of the West Bengal Assembly is expected to be particularly charged.

The treasury bench plans to move two significant motions during the session. One motion will seek to condemn the role of central investigative agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the state, accusing them of political overreach.

The second motion will target the conduct of the Special Intensive Revision, alleging bias and procedural irregularities. Signs already point to a stormy interaction between Banerjee and the Chief Election Commissioner.

Kashmir EOW chargesheets 2 in fake international prize scam

JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch on Sunday said it has filed a charge sheet against two accused in a fake international prize scam that duped a local complainant of large sums of money by promising a fictitious overseas lottery windfall.

In an official statement, the J&K Crime Branch said that the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Kashmir, has produced a charge sheet in Case FIR No. 24/2017 under Section 420 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC), read with Section 66(d) of the Information Technology Act. The charge sheet was submitted before the Court of City Munsif, Srinagar, after investigators established the involvement of the two accused in the fraud.

According to the Crime Branch, the investigation was initiated following a complaint in which the victim stated that he was lured by a fraudulent phone call claiming he had won an international prize of ₹2.35 crore along with a luxury car. The caller allegedly represented the prize as being awarded by M/s Chevrolet Motors Promotion Limited, UK, and persuaded the complainant to proceed with the claim process. The complainant was directed to communicate through an email address, cheprom@liv.co.uk. During subsequent correspondence, he was asked to deposit a certain amount as customs duty into a bank account maintained in the name of Jitu Raj Johari at the State Bank of India (SBI), Sarai Khawja branch. Believing the claims to be genuine, the complainant deposited the required amount.

The Crime Branch said the deception continued even after this payment. The complainant later received another email instructing him to open an account with the Royal Bank of Scotland and deposit an additional sum as Charges of Transfer (COT) through an NSG agency. To meet these demands, the complainant arranged money from multiple sources and made further deposits as instructed.

Despite complying with all the directions, no prize money was ever transferred to the complainant's account. Investigators said the caller, who identified himself as Frank Ban and used the email address frankban@diplomats.com, continued to mislead and reassure the victim with false promises, prolonging the fraud.

3 of a family hacked to death in Jharkhand village

PALAMU

Three members of a family were brutally murdered with sharp weapons in a village in Jharkhand's Palamu district, police said on Sunday, in a shocking incident believed to be triggered by superstition and suspicions of witchcraft. A 16-year-old girl from the same family sustained serious injuries in the attack and is currently battling for her life.

The incident occurred after midnight in Kusri village of Asehar panchayat, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Panki police station area. The deceased have been identified as Vijay Bhuiyan, his wife Hewanti Devi, and their son Chhotu Bhuiyan. Their daughter, Mamta Kumari, was critically injured and has been admitted to the Panki Community Health Centre, where doctors said her condition remains serious.

Police said that soon after receiving information about the crime, a team rushed to the village, cordoned off the area, and launched an investigation. Two neighbours — Ravindra Bhuiyan and Pramod Bhuiyan — have been named as accused in the case, based on preliminary findings and statements from local residents.

According to police and villagers, Vijay Bhuiyan had long-standing disputes with some people in the locality, who allegedly accused his family of practising black magic and witchcraft. These suspicions had reportedly led to repeated arguments in the past, and village councils had even been convened earlier in an attempt to resolve the issue amicably.

Investigators said that a group of people allegedly entered the family's house and first assaulted the members before attacking them with sharp weapons. Vijay Bhuiyan, his wife, and their son were killed on the spot, while Mamta Kumari was left critically wounded.

A pall of gloom descended over Kusri village following the incident, with a large number of villagers and relatives gathering at the crime scene on Sunday morning. Shock and fear were evident among residents, many of whom described the killings as a grim reminder of how deeply entrenched superstitious beliefs can still turn deadly in rural areas.

Panki police station incharge Rajesh Ranjan said swift action was underway and that police were actively pursuing all leads.

Kolkata warehouse fire death toll rises to 27, many still missing

KOLKATA

The death toll from the fire incident at the Anandapur warehouses, situated on the southern outskirts of Kolkata, has increased to 27, while 25 individuals remain unaccounted for, according to officials on Sunday. Police sources said the remains of two more people were recovered from the charred warehouses in Anandapur, taking the death toll to 27.

Amidst this, the formation of an SIT a week after the incident raised questions about the sudden activation of the authorities after such a delay.

The fire broke out at the Pushpanjali decorator's warehouse and the Wow Momo factory in the early hours of January 26.

For 32 hours, despite working with wartime urgency, the fire services could not easily bring the inferno under control. Twelve fire engines were continuously deployed. Workers were trapped inside the warehouses and burned to death.

A week after the devastating fire, the Baruipur district police have finally decided to form an SIT -- a five-member team led by Baruipur District Police SP Shubhendu Kumar. The team also includes the Additional Superintendent of Police, DSP Crime, DEB Inspector and another police officer of inspector rank.

It may be noted that the renowned Momo manufacturing company has faced scrutiny since the fire incident. Several people have been arrested. Allegations have been raised about the factory being built on a reclaimed wetland.

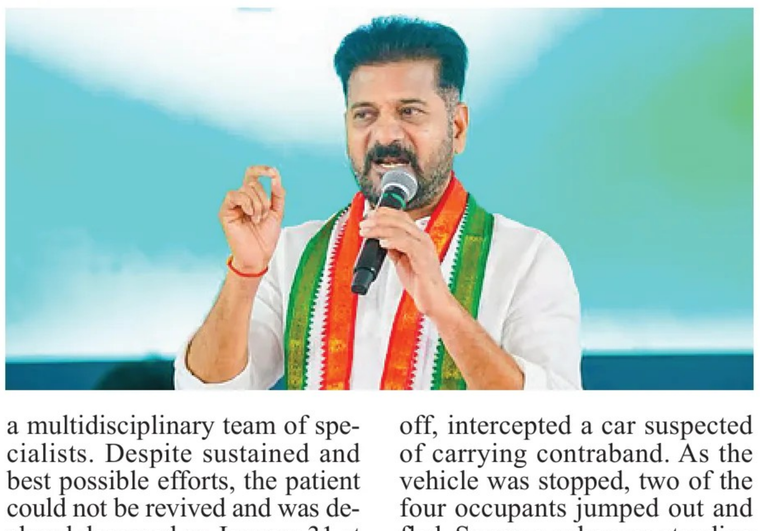
Police sources said the SIT will investigate everything, including examining the forensic report, focusing on DNA testing of the deceased and identifying the irregularities at the factory.

It is worth mentioning that the police have already arrested two more people in connection with this incident. The Narendraput police arrested the manager and deputy manager of the momo manufacturing company. Earlier, the owner of the Pushpanjali decorator's warehouse, Gangadhar Das, was arrested.

NO COMPROMISE

Telangana CM orders stern action over excise constable's death

HYDERABAD



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday directed the police to take strict action against those responsible for the death of excise constable Gajula Soumya, who succumbed to her injuries after an alleged attack by ganja smugglers in Nizamabad district.

The 25-year-old constable passed away night while undergoing treatment at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) in Hyderabad. She had been critically injured during an incident that occurred on January 23 during a vehicle check near Madhavnagar village in Nizamabad district. Expressing deep condolences, the Chief Minister said he was anguished that Soumya lost her life in the line of duty. He instructed senior police officials to ensure that all those involved in the crime are dealt with sternly, and assured that the state government would extend all possible assistance to the bereaved family.

According to a medical bulletin issued by NIMS late, Soumya was provided with all necessary medical interventions and advanced life-support measures by a multidisciplinary team of specialists. Despite sustained and best possible efforts, the patient could not be revived and was declared deceased on January 31 at 9.41 p.m. NIMS extends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, the statement said. Soumya was initially brought to NIMS in the early hours of January 25 and admitted to the Emergency Department before being shifted to the Respiratory Intensive Care Unit. Doctors said she remained unconscious and on life support, with multiple organ systems under severe strain throughout her hospitalization. Police said the incident took place when a special excise team, acting on a tip-off, intercepted a car suspected of carrying contraband. As the vehicle was stopped, two of the four occupants jumped out and fled. Soumya, who was standing in front of the car, was hit when the driver suddenly accelerated. After she fell under the wheels, the driver allegedly reversed the vehicle in an attempt to escape, before crashing into an electric pole while turning left.

The police have arrested the driver and one more suspect, while a search is underway for the remaining two accused. Excise officials also seized 2.5 kg of ganja from the car, which was reportedly being transported from Nirmal district to Nizamabad.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SIDDAMMA W/o ADARSH S HIREMATH, R/o No 19, Abhi Paradise, Muneshwara Layout, Opp to Blue Mango Resort, Arishinakunte, Binnamangala, Nelamangala, Bangalore Rural, Karnataka-562123, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SIHI A HIREMATH.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, BIJU SHARON D/o BIJU SAMUEL, R/o 47 Sharon, Basavaraj Layout, Byrathi Kothanur, Shivarama Karanth Nagar, Bangalore North, Bangalore, Karnataka-560077, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SHARON BIJU.

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I SINDHUMATHI D/O G SIVABALANATHAN, Ex - wife of C SASIKUMAR, resident of R/O PSR Krish Kamal Apartments, Block F-132, Neeladri Road, Doddathogur Village, Next to Himagiri Residence, Electronic City, Phase 1, Bengaluru, Karnataka560100, declare that I got divorce from my husband vide Court Decree No. M C No. 11923/25 dated 22/01/2020. Further I have changed the name of my minor daughter ADITI SASHI aged 16 years and he shall hereafter be known as ADITI I.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SUTHAKARAN SUBRAMANIAN S/o M SUBRAMANIAN, R/o No-161, 10th Main Road, N R I Layout, Ramamurthy Nagar, Bangalore North, Doorvaninagar, Bangalore, Karnataka-560016, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as S.SUTHAKARAN.

CHANGE OF NAME

It is for general information that I SREESUKHI D/O BALAKRISHNAN MENON, Ex - wife of SUDARSHAN RAMACHANDRA, resident of R/O Villa No 262,Block No 8 Valmark Cityville, Tejaswini Nagar Phase-1, Hulimavu, Off Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560076, declare that I got divorce from my husband vide Court Decree No. M C No. 4453/2024 dated 02/08/2024. Further I have changed the name of mine and my minor daughter namely VAMIKA SUDARSHAN, aged 16 years and we shall hereafter be known as SREESUKHI B MENON and VAMIKA MENON.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Rajanna S/o late Hanumappa, aged about 60 years, R/at Yadahalli village, Balla post, Avani Hobli, Mulbagal Taluk, Kolar District, do herby solemnly affirm and state on oath follws:
I sward Xerox the said Original documents in Xerox center bus-stand, Mulbagal town, I have lost the entire documents file relating to the below said item no 1 to 17 documents on 20-12-2025 with my best efforts I could not trace out the same.

1. 25-11-2002	No.2153/2002-03
2. 29-04-2001	No.225/2011-12
3. 6/3/2006	No.1802/2005-06
4. 26-12-2012	No.4270/2012-13
5. 6/8/2013	No.2198/2013-14
6. 24-11-2015	No.2876/205-16
7. 27-03-2013	No.6629/2012-13
8. 22-12-2015	No.3299/2015-16
9. 4/2/2014	No.4763/2013-14
10. 22-12-2015	No.3298/2015-16
11. 28-02-2014	No.5268/2013-14
12. 24-11-2015	No.2877/2015-16
13. 15-09-2014	No.2865/2014-15
14. 18-06-2015	No.927/2015-16
15. 9/11/2015	No.2708/2015-16
16. 2/5/2013	No.639/2013-14
17. 25-11-2015	No.2906/2015-16

Govt. of Karnataka
Office of the Executive Engineer,
Panchayath Raj Engineering Division, Vijayapur
Tel.No:08352-277816, Fax.No:08352-277817,
E-Mail:zpebjp9@yahoo.co.in
ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ:ಕಾಇಂ/ಪಂ.ರಾ.ಇ.ವಿ/ವಿಜ/ಇಪ್ರಾ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/2025–26/3488 ದಿನಾಂಕ:31.01.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION (Two Cover System)

Executive Engineer, PRE Division, Vijayapura has invited e-tender for the works under 5054 Flood Grant, 5054 CM Special Grant and Tribal Sub Pla (SCSP) Grant scheme for the year 2024-25, 2025-26 & 2022-23 Work Indent No. RDPR/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT23611 **for General Bidders,** RDPR/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT16258/Call-2 for SC Bidders, RDPR/2025-26/BD/WORK_INDENT23709 for CAT-II(A) Bidders, Rs. 8.00 Lakhs to Rs.150.00 Lakhs Total 3 work vide Tender Publication No.3488 Date: 31.01.2026. Last Date for submission of Tender is 10.02.2026 time 5.30 PM.
For more information about the tender, the information can be collected at the website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in or visit the office of the said Division during office hours.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
P.R.E. Division, Vijayapur

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Budget historic, a highway of opportunities: Modi

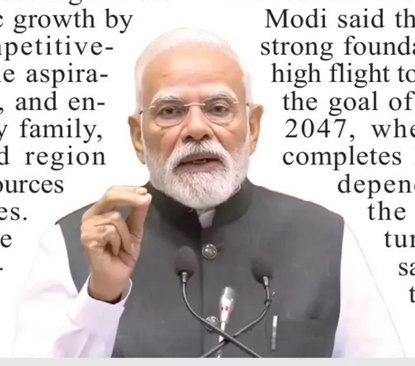
PM hailed the Union Budget 2026-27 as "historic," emphasizing its focus on youth, infra, and equitable development for a prosperous India

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday strongly endorsed the Union Budget 2026–27, describing it as a highway of immense opportunities that would inject fresh energy into India's reform journey. He said the country's Reform Express would gain new momentum through the measures announced, helping convert present aspirations into long-term national achievements.

The remarks came after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her ninth consecutive Union Budget in Parliament, a milestone that Modi described as historic. Congratulating Sitharaman, the Prime Minister said the occasion was a powerful reflection of India's Nari Shakti, noting that she has set a record by presenting the Union Budget nine times in a row as a woman finance minister.

According to the Prime Minister, the Budget is guided by three key kartavyas—boosting and sustaining economic growth by improving competitiveness, meeting the aspirations of citizens, and ensuring that every family, community, and region has access to resources and opportunities. He said these guiding principles would help strengthen the foundations of a more inclusive and resilient economy.



Modi said the Budget lays a strong foundation for India's high flight towards achieving the goal of a Viksit Bharat 2047, when the country completes 100 years of independence. Calling the document future-oriented, he said it would turn the dreams of today into reality and ensure a brighter tomorrow for coming generations.

Describing the Budget as unique, the Prime Minister highlighted its balanced focus on reducing the fiscal deficit and controlling inflation, while simultaneously pushing high capital expenditure (CAPEX) to drive growth. He said this combination would strengthen India's macroeconomic stability and enhance its standing on the global stage.

Modi also underlined the Budget's emphasis on trust-based governance and a human-centric economic structure. He said the path-breaking reforms announced would open up the sky for India's aspiring and talented youth, enabling them to innovate, compete globally, and lead growth in emerging sectors. Highlighting India's rising global profile, the Prime Minister said the country's role as a trusted democratic partner and a reliable, quality supplier is expanding.

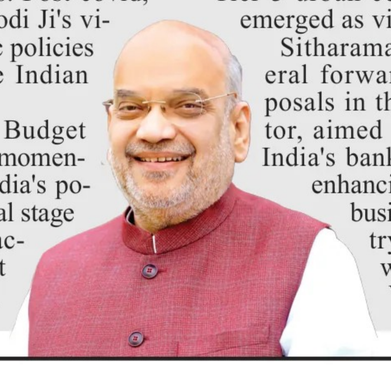
Budget turbocharges momentum to bolster India's global position: Shah

NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday hailed the Union Budget 2026-27 as an embodiment of India forging its new identity as an emerging economic power centre and said that it furthers the momentum to bolster the country's global standing. He also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic policies and said that they have fuelled India's economy.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her ninth consecutive Union Budget on Sunday.

In a post on X, HM Shah said, Viksit Bharat Budget embodies Bharat as a nation forging its new identity as an emerging economic power centre with resolute trust in its own strengths. Post covid, PM Narendra Modi Ji's visionary economic policies have fuelled the Indian economy.



Viksit Bharat Budget turbocharges the momentum to bolster India's position on the global stage as the most attractive investment destination for a wide range of sectors, from traditional to the new-age ones, he added.

Sitharaman's ninth budget was motivated by three 'kartavyas' or duties aimed at boosting and maintaining economic growth by improving competitiveness, meeting aspirations, and ensuring that every family, community, and region has access to resources and opportunities for engagement.

She announced a powerful thrust on infrastructure development in her Union Budget speech for 2026-27, emphasising sustained public investment to drive economic growth and balanced regional progress. The government will maintain its strong focus on enhancing infrastructure in cities with populations exceeding five lakh, particularly Tier-2 and Tier-3 urban centres that have emerged as vital growth hubs.

Sitharaman outlined several forward-looking proposals in the financial sector, aimed at strengthening India's banking system and enhancing ease of doing business as the country progresses towards the goal of Viksit Bharat.

Disappointing, deplorable budget: Akhilesh Yadav

NEW DELHI

As Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the Union Budget 2026 in Parliament, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav launched a sharp attack on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), alleging that the government's budgetary policies are designed to benefit only a small section of society aligned with the party.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament of India, Yadav said he had no expectations from the BJP-led government or the budget it presented. He claimed that successive budgets under the current regime have consistently ignored the needs of the majority of citizens. When I have no expectations from the BJP government, what can I expect from its budget? he said. So far, the budgets that have been presented appear to be meant for only one-twentieth of the population. This means the budget is designed for just five per cent of the country.

Yadav alleged that the BJP uses the Union Budget as a tool to favour its own supporters and ensure their economic progress, while the poor and marginalized sections are left behind. He argued that a truly good budget should focus on improving the lives of the poor and bringing real happiness and relief to them, rather than concentrating benefits in the hands of a few.

The Samajwadi Party chief also questioned the government's claims of development, urging the BJP to revisit its own election manifesto. He challenged the ruling party to explain how many smart cities it has actually developed, despite repeated promises. Referring to issues of basic civic amenities, Yadav said the government had claimed to have improved solid waste management, yet incidents of people dying after consuming contaminated water point to serious governance failures.

On the global stage, Yadav accused the government of projecting an image of success that does not match ground realities. He said India has faced international criticism over poor air quality and environmental conditions, adding that such issues could discourage foreign investment.

A 'visionary document' for developing India: Tripura min

AGARTALA

Welcoming the Union Budget 2026–27 presented by Nirmala Sitharaman, Tripura Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury described it as a people-centric and development-oriented budget that strengthens the foundation of a Viksit Bharat. Reacting to the budget proposals, he said the Centre's announcement to develop India as a global medical tourism hub, along with measures to strengthen the caregiver ecosystem in the health sector, reflects the government's commitment to building a robust, inclusive, and future-ready healthcare framework. He said such initiatives would not only improve health services domestically but also position India as a trusted destination for affordable and quality medical care. The minister particularly welcomed the proposal to construct women's hostels in every district across the country. Calling it a transformative step, He also hailed the announcement to establish 16,000 new secondary schools nationwide, terming it a landmark initiative to strengthen India's education infrastructure. He said expanding access to secondary education is essential for improving learning outcomes, reducing drop-out rates, and preparing students for higher education and skill-based employment in a rapidly changing economy. Chowdhury said the budget offers meaningful relief to middle-class salaried professionals, a segment that has faced sustained pressure from rising living costs in recent years. At the same time, he said the proposals reinforce the broader vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, by focusing on strengthening domestic manufacturing capacity, enhancing energy security, and reducing dependence on imports.

QUICK READ

Maghi Purnima: Lakhs take holy dip across country

Prayagraj

Lakhs of devotees gathered at river ghats nationwide on Maghi Purnima, amid chants, drumbeats, and a vast display of faith, expressing their joy and spiritual satisfaction after taking a dip. The Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, saw an extraordinary turnout from the early hours, amid elaborate security and administrative measures. At Prayagraj, pilgrims began arriving at the Sangam and other ghats from the previous night to take part in the sacred snan at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati, marking one of the most significant bathing rituals of the ongoing Magh Mela.

DIAL-112 ensures swift response at Medaram Jatara

Hyderabad

A temporary Dial-112 emergency response call centre of Telangana Police handled over 500 emergency calls during 'Sammakka Saralamma Jatara' at Medaram in Mulugu district. The temporary facility operated from January 18 to 31 to ensure a swift emergency response and enhanced public safety during the Jatara, the largest tribal festival in Asia. Telangana Integrated Command Control Centre (TGICCC) said on Sunday that the temporary facility was equipped with two dispatch desks and functioned round-the-clock in four shifts, ensuring uninterrupted emergency response services.

Mayawati accuses political parties of 'misusing' Sant Ravidas

LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Sunday launched a sharp attack on governments and various political parties, accusing them of distorting the humanist messages of saints and great personalities for narrow political and electoral gains. Her remarks came on the occasion of Sant Guru Shri Ravidas Jayanti.

The BSP chief accused governments and political parties of distorting Sant Ravidas' humanist teachings for vote-bank politics.

Paying tribute to Sant Ravidas, Mayawati extended greetings to his followers across India and abroad. She said the misuse of saints' teachings for vote-bank politics has weakened peace, brotherhood, and social harmony in the country. According to her, political forces often selectively invoke spiritual icons without truly embracing or implementing their core values in governance and public life.

Highlighting Sant Ravidas' famous message — Man changa to kathauti me Ganga (If the soul is pure, the Ganges is in the vessel) — Mayawati said the teaching is not merely spiritual but forms the foundation of genuine social transformation. However, she alleged that those in power have reduced such messages to superficial devotion, instead of imbibing their essence to promote equality, justice, and inclusive development.

The BSP chief noted that Sant Ravidas devoted his life to fighting caste discrimination, hatred, and social evils, offering humanity a vision rooted in dignity and social justice. She said the widening gap between words and actions among political leaders has led to growing unrest, dissatisfaction, and distrust in society.

Mayawati further alleged that most political parties remember Sant Ravidas only during election seasons, using his legacy to seek votes while neglecting the real issues faced by his millions of followers.

His message links religion with social service and public awareness, not with power-driven and self-serving politics, she said.

Bribery: CBI arrests UP Gramin Bank branch manager, field officer

LUCKNOW

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested the Branch Manager and a Field Officer of UP Gramin Bank's Sahaspur branch in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district, along with a private individual, for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 45,000, an official statement said on Sunday. The bribe was demanded in connection with the sanction of a government loan, the statement added. The arrested accused have been identified as Kapil Kumar, Branch Manager, UP Gramin Bank, Sahaspur, Bijnor; Vikas Kumar, Field Officer of the same branch; and Mohd Noman, a casual worker who acted as a private intermediary.

The CBI registered the case on January 31 following a complaint against the Field Officer.

According to the agency, the complainant's wife had applied for a loan of Rs 5 lakh under the Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Yojana with the UP Gramin Bank branch in Sahaspur. It was alleged that the Field Officer initially demanded an illegal gratification of Rs 40,000 from the complainant in exchange for processing and sanctioning the loan. The demand was subsequently raised to Rs 45,000, the CBI said.

After verifying the complaint, the agency laid a trap to apprehend the accused. During the course of the operation, it was revealed that the Field Officer had demanded the bribe in criminal conspiracy with the Branch Manager. The private individual, identified as a casual worker, allegedly facilitated the transaction

ALL ARE WELCOME

Prez Murmu inaugurates Amrit Udyan at Rashtrapati Bhavan

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday graced the opening of the Amrit Udyan Winter Annuals Edition 2026 at Rashtrapati Bhavan, offering visitors the opportunity to experience the seasonal blooms and curated landscapes at the gardens.

According to a press release issued by the President's Secretariat, the Amrit Udyan of Rashtrapati Bhavan will be open for public viewing from February 3 to March 31. Visitors will be able to access the garden six days a week between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., with the last entry permitted at 5.00 p.m. The garden will remain closed on Mondays earmarked for maintenance, and also on March 4 on account of Holi.

The press release stated that the Amrit Udyan will also be open exclusively for special categories on designated days.

These include March 3 for Defence Personnel, March 5 for Senior Citizens, March 10 for Women and Tribal Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and March 13 for Divyangjan. Emphasising accessibility, the President's Secretariat noted that entry to the Garden is free of cost.

However, visitors will be required to book their tickets only through the online portal, as no on-the-spot booking facility will be available this year.

Online bookings can be made through the official website at https://visit.rashtrapatibhavan.gov.in/. Visitors have been advised to book their slots well in advance and strictly adhere to the timelines and instructions mentioned on the ticket. Booking for a particular day will close at 10.00 a.m. on the previous day.

Entry and exit for all visitors will be through Gate No. 35 of the President's Estate, located near the junction of North Avenue and Rashtrapati Bhavan.

For visitor convenience, a shuttle bus service from Central Secretariat Metro Station to Gate No. 35 will operate every 30 minutes between 9.30 a.m. and 6.00 p.m., with the last shuttle departing at 4.00 p.m.

The designated visitor route will include Bal Vatika, Pulmeria Garden, Banyan Garden, Bonsai Garden, Babbling Brook, Central Lawn, Long Garden and Circular Garden. Apart from tulips and various varieties of roses, visitors will be able to see the Babbling Brook, described as a water stream with cascades, and the Banyan Garden with reflexology paths.

ENTRY DETAILS FOR VISITORS

ENTRY POINT

- Swing by Gate No. 35 on North Avenue Road, President's Estate—your one-stop for arrivals and exits. It's Metro-friendly, hugging Central Secretariat station, and signposted clearly for first-timers.

TIMINGS

- People can visit the Udyan six days a week between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. (last entry at 5.00 p.m.). The Udyan will remain closed on Mondays, which are maintenance days and on March 4 on account of Holi.

BOOKING BASICS

- **Free entry:** No cost to enter Amrit Udyan. It's open to everyone.
- **Pre-book slots:** Book hourly time slots online at visit.rashtrapatibhavan.gov.in with your mobile number. One booking per number. Max 30 people per slot, or 100 for schools.
- **Walk-ins:** Register at kiosks outside Gate 35 if no booking.
- **What to bring:** Arrive on time. Show digital pass (QR code) and government ID (Aadhaar, passport, etc.).
- **Rules:** No bags larger than 15x15x10 cm. No food or drinks. Security checks are quick and strict.

VISITOR FACILITIES

- Visitors can carry mobile phones, electronic keys, purses/handbags, water bottles and milk bottles for infants. Provision for drinking water, toilets, and first aid/ medical facilities will be made at various places along the public route.

SPECIAL DAYS

- **March 3** – for Defence Personnel
- **March 5** – for Senior Citizens
- **March 10** – for Women and Tribal Women's SHGs
- **March 13** – for Divyangjan

QUICK READ

BNP poll office vandalised in Dinajpur amid campaign row

Dhaka

A Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) election campaign office was vandalised in Nawabganj upazila of Dinajpur in Bangladesh amid heightened political tensions ahead of the upcoming national elections, local media reported on Sunday. According to Dhaka Tribune, the incident occurred at the BNP campaign office located in the Dolardarga area of Putimari Union under the Dinajpur-6 constituency, which comprises Biram-pur, Nawabganj, Ghoraghat and Hakimpur. Witnesses alleged that activists of Jamaat-e-Islami attacked the office, breaking chairs and tables and tearing down banners and campaign materials. Two BNP activists who were present at the office at the time were also reportedly assaulted during the attack.

Mob killings, jail custodial deaths double in B'desh in Jan

Dhaka

Bangladesh witnessed a sharp rise in mob violence in January, with the number of deaths from public beatings more than doubling compared to the previous month. At the same time, fatalities in jail custody also rose significantly, raising serious concerns about law and order and the overall human rights situation as the country heads towards national elections. According to the monthly monitoring report released by the Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF), at least 21 people were killed in mob attacks in January, compared to 10 such deaths reported in December 2025. The report, which was released, termed the human rights situation in January as alarmingly violent and complex.

China-Russia hold security talks amid shifting global dynamics

Russian security chief Sergei Shoigu's China visit highlights growing strategic coordination amid evolving global and regional security challenges

BEIJING

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu arrived in China on Sunday for high-level discussions focused on international and regional security, according to reports from Russian media outlets citing official sources.

During the visit, Shoigu is scheduled to meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, underscoring the importance both countries attach to continued strategic dialogue at a time of heightened global uncertainty.

According to the Interfax news agency, the talks will center on the changing situation in the sphere of international and regional security. While specific agenda details were not publicly disclosed, analysts expect the discussions to cover a broad range of issues, including geopolitical stability, regional flashpoints, and the evolving balance of power in Asia and beyond.

The timing of Shoigu's visit is particularly significant. It coincides with renewed diplomatic activity involving Russia, Ukraine, and the United States, where officials have recently held talks aimed at ending the nearly four-year-long conflict between Moscow and Kyiv. Although China is not a direct participant in those negotiations, Beijing has positioned itself as an influential global actor with a stated interest in conflict resolution and regional stability.

For Moscow and Beijing, sustained security consultations reflect a shared emphasis on strategic coordination in response to what both countries often describe as a rapidly changing international order. Over recent years, Russia and China have expanded cooperation across defense, economic, and diplomatic spheres, frequently emphasizing principles such as multipolarity and non-interference.

Observers note that meetings at the level of a security council secretary and a foreign minister indicate discussions that go beyond routine diplomacy. Such engagements often involve assessments of long-term security trends, crisis management mechanisms, and coordination within international forums.

While no joint statements were immediately released following Shoigu's arrival, the visit itself sends a clear signal of continued engagement between Russia and China on security matters. As diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukraine conflict continue, the outcomes of these discussions may have implications not only for regional stability in Eurasia but also for broader global security dynamics in the months ahead.

SpaceX measures curbed 'Russian use' of Starlink: Musk

WASHINGTON

'Looks like the steps we took to stop the unauthorized use of Starlink by Russia have worked'

Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk said on Sunday that steps taken by his aerospace company SpaceX to prevent Russia from using the Starlink satellite internet system without authorization appear to have been effective.

Musk made the remarks in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, responding to mounting concerns from Ukrainian officials over the alleged military use of the technology.

Looks like the steps we took to stop the unauthorized use of Starlink by Russia have worked. Let us know if more needs to be done, Musk wrote. His statement comes amid heightened scrutiny of how commercial satellite communication systems are being deployed in modern warfare, particularly in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Starlink, operated by SpaceX, provides high-speed internet access via a network of low-Earth orbit satellites and has played a critical role in maintaining communications in Ukraine since the early stages of the war. Ukrainian authorities have repeatedly emphasized its importance for both civilian connectivity and military coordination.

However, concerns emerged last week after Ukrainian officials said they had discovered Starlink terminals being used on long-range drones deployed in Russian attacks. Ukrainian Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov stated on Thursday that Kyiv is actively working with SpaceX to prevent Russia from using the satellite system to guide drones or enhance its battlefield capabilities.

Fedorov said Ukraine had raised the issue directly with the company after evidence suggested that Russian forces were exploiting the system despite restrictions. He added that ensuring Starlink remains inaccessible to Russian military units is essential for maintaining Ukraine's defensive edge and preventing further escalation.

SpaceX has previously maintained that it does not provide Starlink services directly to Russia and that any unauthorized use violates its terms of service. The company has also said it continues to update safeguards to prevent misuse of the technology in conflict zones.

The episode highlights the growing role of private technology firms in global security matters, as well as the challenges of controlling dual-use technologies during armed conflicts. As the war continues, coordination between governments and private companies like SpaceX is expected to remain crucial in shaping how advanced communication tools are used or restricted on the battlefield.

NK premier highlights Kim's regional development

SEOUL

North Korean Premier Pak Thae-song has highlighted the regional development initiative being pushed for by leader Kim Jong-un as the state's top priority, calling on officials to devote themselves to the plans, its state media reported Sunday.

Pak made the remarks during a groundbreaking ceremony of a construction project in Pyongwon County, South Phyongan Province, the previous day, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. In a speech at the event, Pak described the Regional Development 20X10 Policy as the highest priority for the party and the state, urging officials to commit themselves to implementing the policy.

Trump's special envoy for Iraq steps down

WASHINGTON

Mark Savaya, who was appointed by Donald Trump as the United States' special envoy for Iraq in October, is no longer serving in that role, according to sources familiar with the decision. The development comes at a sensitive moment in U.S.–Iraq relations, as disagreements deepen between Washington and Baghdad over efforts to limit Iran's political and strategic influence inside Iraq.

While no official explanation has been publicly issued for Savaya's departure, the timing has drawn attention from diplomats and regional analysts. Washington has increasingly pressed Iraqi leaders to curb Tehran's role in Iraqi politics, particularly the influence of Iran-backed political factions and armed groups. Baghdad, meanwhile, has sought to balance its ties with both the United States and neighboring Iran, resisting what some Iraqi officials view as external pressure on its internal affairs.

Savaya, a Christian Iraqi-American entrepreneur, was among a small group of Arab Americans elevated to senior roles by the Trump administration. His appointment last year was seen as part of a broader outreach strategy aimed at Middle Eastern communities in the United States. During the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump invested significant political capital in courting Arab and Muslim voters, particularly in key battleground areas such as Detroit and other parts of Michigan.

As special envoy, Savaya was expected to leverage his background and regional understanding to help navigate the complex political landscape in Iraq. His role included engaging with Iraqi officials, monitoring political developments, and contributing to broader U.S. efforts to

stabilize the country while countering Iranian influence. However, sources say the position has now been vacated, and it remains unclear whether a successor will be named in the near future.

The departure highlights the challenges Washington faces in Iraq, where U.S. policy goals often collide with domestic political realities. Iran's influence, cultivated over decades through political alliances, economic ties, and militia networks, remains deeply entrenched. Efforts by the United States to push back against that influence have frequently strained relations with Iraqi leaders who are wary of being caught in the middle of regional rivalries.

Baloch clashes leave dozens of militants, civilians dead

QUETTA

At least 92 militants were killed during intense clashes with Pakistan's security forces across multiple cities in the southwestern province of Balochistan, the military said in an official statement. The violence marked one of the deadliest days in the region in recent months and underscored the persistent security challenges faced by authorities in the restive province.

According to the military, clearance operations were launched in response to coordinated militant attacks targeting both security installations and civilian areas. During these operations, 15 members of Pakistan's security forces were killed, highlighting the high cost of ongoing counter-insurgency efforts.

The military added that militants also carried out attacks on civilians in several locations, killing at least 18 people, including women and children.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest but least populated province, has long been plagued by a separatist insurgency driven by grievances over political marginalization, economic neglect, and disputes over the control of natural resources. Militant groups operating in the region have frequently targeted security forces, infrastructure projects, and, at times, civilians, leading to cycles of violence and retaliation.

Clashes came just a day after Pakistan's military said it had killed 41 militants in separate raids across Balochistan. The back-to-back operations suggest an escalation in counterterrorism activity as authorities seek to dismantle militant networks believed to be behind a recent uptick in attacks.

The province's strategic location, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, has added complexity to the security situation. Militants have often exploited the rugged terrain and porous borders to evade capture, while regional instability has contributed to the persistence of armed groups.

Pakistan's military said it remains committed to restoring peace and stability in Balochistan and vowed to continue operations against militant elements.

Zelensky says Ukraine-Russia-US talks to be held in Abu Dhabi from Wednesday

KYIV

President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday announced that fresh two-day negotiations involving envoys from the United States, Russia, and Ukraine aimed at ending the war would begin in Abu Dhabi from Wednesday.

Zelensky took to X and said, "The dates for the next trilateral meetings have been set - February 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi. Ukraine is ready for a substantive discussion, and we are interested in ensuring that the outcome brings us closer to a real and dignified end to the war."

Prince Andrew should testify before US Cong: Starmer

LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that the former Prince Andrew should testify before a U.S. congressional committee, following the release of new documents detailing his links to the late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Starmer's remarks mark one of the strongest public statements by a serving UK leader on the long-running controversy surrounding the Duke of York.

The comments came a day after the U.S. Justice Department published additional files related to Epstein, shedding fresh light on his network of high-profile associates. Among the newly released materials were emails indicating that Prince Andrew, the brother of King Charles III, maintained regular contact with Epstein for more than two years after the financier had been convicted of child sex crimes.

Speaking to reporters, Starmer said transparency and accountability were essential when serious allegations and revelations involve public figures. He added that testifying before a U.S. congressional committee would provide Prince Andrew an opportunity to address the claims directly and clarify the nature of his relationship with Epstein. While the British government does not have authority over royal family members, Starmer emphasized that cooperation with lawful investigations is a matter of principle.

Prince Andrew has long denied any wrongdoing and has previously said he severed ties with Epstein after becoming aware of the financier's criminal conduct. However, the latest disclosures have renewed scrutiny of those claims and reignited public debate in the United Kingdom and abroad. Buckingham Palace has not commented on the newly released documents or Starmer's statement.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

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6		2		4		8		5
	6		3		8	4		9
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9		4		8		7		6
1		6	5		7	9		8

1	8	7	3	6	4	2	9	5
2	6	4	7	5	9	8	1	3
5	3	9	2	1	8	7	6	4
4	5	2	1	9	3	3	7	8
9	1	6	5	8	7	3	4	2
3	7	8	4	2	6	1	5	9
7	2	5	9	3	1	4	8	6
6	9	1	8	4	2	5	3	7
8	4	3	6	7	5	9	2	1

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

LIAM RAMOS

Judge orders release of 5-yr-old boy detained in Minnesota

MINNESOTA

A Liam Conejo Ramos and his father, Adrian Conejo Arias, must be released from federal immigration custody, a judge ruled, following their detention by immigration officers during a raid in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, United States last month.

The high-profile case captured national attention after a widely shared photograph showed the young child in a bright blue bunny hat standing outside his home as federal agents stood nearby.

U.S. District Judge Fred Biery of the Western District of Texas issued the order, sharply criticizing the government's immigration enforcement strategy. In his ruling, Biery described the detention of the father and son as part of an ill-conceived and incompetently-implemented government pursuit of daily deportation quotas, comments that resonated with advocates and critics alike who have condemned the case as an example of harsh immigration policy in practice.

The father and son were among four students detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in a sweep earlier this month, according to the Columbia Heights Public School District. The family, originally from Ecuador, entered the United States in 2024 and had an active asylum claim pending at the time of their arrest. The pair were transferred to a family detention facility in Dilley, Texas, before the judge's latest order.

Judge Biery's ruling emphasized constitutional concerns with the use of administrative warrants by immigration officials, questioning whether such warrants meet the legal standard of probable cause and underscoring the need for independent judicial oversight. The judge also wrote that immigration enforcement must proceed in a manner that respects human dignity and the rule of law.

The case ignited a broader national debate over immigration enforcement tactics, particularly the treatment of children during raids. Images of Liam with his blue bunny hat and Spider-Man backpack became a symbol of public unease, prompting protests and statements from child-welfare advocates. In some accounts, community members painted origami rabbits in solidarity with the child, as Conejo means rabbit in Spanish.

The Department of Homeland Security disputed some of the allegations surrounding the tactics used during the raid, but the judge's order reflects growing judicial scrutiny of immigration enforcement operations.

QUICK READ

USWU to continue bargaining with Marathon Petroleum

Texas

The United Steel Workers Union said late that it would extend negotiations with Marathon Petroleum, easing immediate fears of a large-scale strike that could have disrupted operations at U.S. refineries and chemical plants. The move temporarily averts a walkout by roughly 30,000 workers represented by the union across multiple facilities nationwide. Under the agreement, the two sides have entered into a rolling 24-hour contract extension. This means the existing labor contract, which had been set to expire at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Time (0501 GMT) on Sunday, will remain in force while negotiations continue. Either party now has the option to issue a 24-hour notice the union to strike or Marathon Petroleum to lock workers out before taking further action.

Bitcoin slides to two-month low amid fed policy fears

New York

Bitcoin, the world's largest cryptocurrency by market value, extended its recent selloff, falling 6.53% to $78,719.63 by 12:48 p.m. ET (1748 GMT), according to market data. The decline followed weakness in the previous session and underscored renewed investor caution toward risk assets amid shifting expectations for U.S. monetary policy. Bitcoin dropped as low as $81,104, its weakest level since November 21, before continuing lower over the weekend. The slide came as the U.S. dollar strengthened after former Federal Reserve Governor Kevin Warsh was selected as the next chair of the Federal Reserve. The dollar's gains added pressure to cryptocurrencies, which often move inversely to the greenback.

Toyota recalls over 161,000 vehicles in US over defect

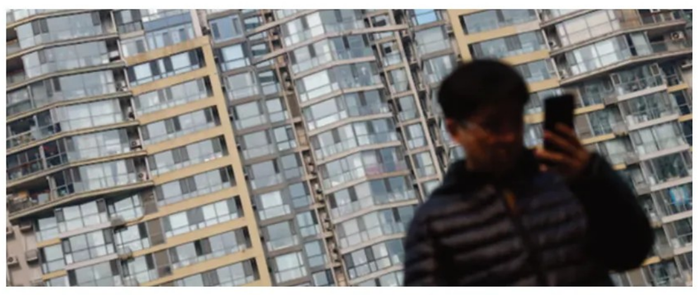
Tokyo

Japanese automaker Toyota is recalling 161,268 vehicles in the United States after a defect was discovered in the rear-view camera display system, according to a statement released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The issue could prevent the rear-view image from displaying correctly when the vehicle is placed in reverse, increasing the risk of a crash. The NHTSA said the recall affects certain Toyota models equipped with an integrated rear-view camera system that may intermittently fail or display a blank or distorted image. Rear-view cameras are a federally mandated safety feature in the U.S., designed to improve visibility behind vehicles and reduce the risk of backover accidents, particularly involving pedestrians, children, and cyclists.

China's housing slump shows tentative signs of stabilisation

China's new home prices rose modestly in January, while secondary market declines narrowed amid renewed stabilisation pledges.

BEIJING



Average prices of new homes across 100 Chinese cities increased in January, while price declines in the secondary, or resale, market showed signs of easing, according to a private survey released on Sunday. The data points to tentative improvement in China's long-struggling property sector, following renewed government commitments to stabilise housing demand and restore buyer confidence.

According to the China Index Academy, one of the country's largest real estate research institutions, new home prices rose by 0.18% month-on-month in January. While this marked a slowdown from the 0.28% increase recorded in December, it still reflected a continuation of the modest upward trend seen in recent months. Analysts say the data suggests that policy support is beginning to have a measurable, if limited, impact.

The research firm also noted that price declines in the secondary housing market narrowed further during the month, indicating that selling pressure may be gradually easing. The resale market has been under particular strain over the past two years, as cautious buyers delayed purchases amid economic uncertainty, falling developer confidence, and concerns over unfinished projects.

Several major cities played a key role in supporting January's price gains. Cities such as Chengdu, Shanghai, and Hangzhou saw the launch of high-end, upgraded housing projects during the month. These premium developments helped lift both month-on-month and year-on-year prices in first- and second-tier cities, where demand from higher-income buyers has proven more resilient.

The China Index Academy said that improved product quality, better locations, and stronger developer reputations have attracted buyers willing to pay higher prices, even as overall market sentiment remains cautious. As a result, price performance in larger cities has continued to outperform that of smaller, lower-tier markets, many of which are still grappling with oversupply.

January's data comes against the backdrop of renewed pledges by Chinese authorities to support the property sector, which remains a key pillar of the world's second-largest economy. In recent months, policymakers have rolled out measures including easier mortgage terms, relaxed purchase restrictions in some cities, and increased financing support for developers to ensure project completion.

Budget 2026-27 rolls out tax holiday for foreign firms

NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday announced a tax holiday till 2047 to any foreign company that provides cloud services to customers globally by using data centre services from India as part of the proposals in the Union Budget 2026-27 presented in the Parliament on Sunday.

The move is aimed at developing critical infrastructure and boosting investment in data centres. Those availing of the incentive will have to provide services to Indian customers through an Indian reseller entity, the Finance Minister said.

The Union Budget also provides for a safe harbour of 15 per cent on cost in case the company providing data centre services from India is a related entity.

To harness the efficiency of just-in-time logistics for electronic manufacturing, the Finance Minister proposed in the budget to provide a safe harbour to non-residents for component warehousing in a bonded warehouse at a profit margin of 2 per cent of the invoice value. The resultant tax of about 0.7 per cent will be much lower than in competing jurisdictions.

Besides, in order to give a fillip to toll manufacturing in India, the Finance Minister has proposed to provide exemption from income tax for 5 years, to any non-resident who provides capital goods, equipment or tooling, to any toll manufacturer in a bonded zone.

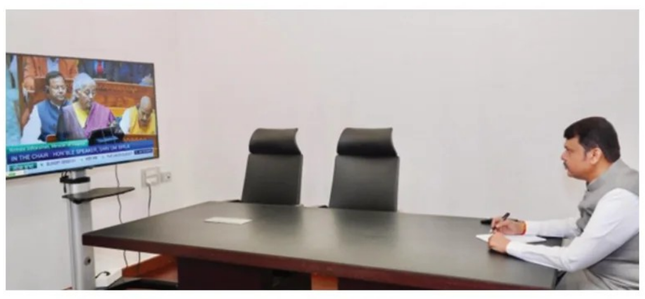
The Budget proposals also provide an exemption to the global (non-India-sourced) income of a non-resident expert, for a stay period of 5 years under the notified schemes. This is intended to encourage a vast pool of global talent to work in India for a longer period of time

It also proposes to provide an exemption from Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) to all non-residents who pay tax on a presumptive basis.

The Finance Minister in her speech stated that the Budget aims to sustain the moment of structural reforms, continuous, adaptive and forward-looking and for cutting edge technologies, including AI, which can serve as growth multipliers.

A powerful step towards developed India: Fadnavis

MUMBAI



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said the Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was a powerful step towards a developed India. In his first reaction after the Union Budget presentation in the Lok Sabha, the chief minister said, By planned urbanisation, promoting industry and entrepreneurship, and taking firm measures for investment and job creation, this budget has laid a strong foundation. An investment of Rs 12 lakh crore in infrastructure, substantial provisions for agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and irrigation have been made.

He further stated, Following the success of the Lakhpati Didi scheme, the plan to create separate malls and industrial opportunities exclusively for women is extremely important. A scheme for hostels for girls pursuing higher education in every district has been announced. The decision to establish emergency medical facilities in district hospitals will prove invaluable for the health sector.

CM Fadnavis said, The Mumbai-Pune and Pune-Hyderabad high-speed corridors will lead to a significant increase in GDP. Each growth hub will receive Rs 5,000 crore over the next five years, and the benefit of this will go to Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune Metropolitan Region, and Nagpur Metropolitan Growth Hub.

Earlier, presenting the Union Budget 2026 on Sunday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlined three central 'kartavyas', or duties, to steer India's economy through global uncertainty while sustaining growth and fulfilling people's aspirations. Our government's 'sankalp' is to focus on the poor, underprivileged and disadvantaged, Sitharaman said.

The Finance Minister, in her record ninth Budget, said the government's economic roadmap would be anchored in accelerating growth, ensuring inclusive development and maintaining the momentum of structural reforms.

This involves: Accelerating and sustaining economic growth by enhancing productivity and global competitiveness. Fulfilling the aspirations of the people, positioning growth as the foundation of India's long-term prosperity and Advancing Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas by ensuring all farmers, communities and religions have equitable access to resources and opportunities, and wider participation in development, she said.

AI INFRA PUSH

Nvidia plans huge OpenAI investment

TAIPIE

U.S. chip making giant Nvidia is planning to make what could be its largest-ever investment in OpenAI, Chief Executive Jensen Huang said, firmly rejecting speculation that he was unhappy with the creator of ChatGPT.

Huang described the planned commitment as huge, signaling Nvidia's intent to deepen its financial and strategic ties with one of the most influential players in the artificial intelligence industry.

Speaking amid heightened interest in the rapidly evolving AI sector, Huang said reports suggesting tensions between Nvidia and OpenAI were unfounded. His comments come as competition intensifies among technology companies racing to develop and deploy advanced generative AI systems, driving unprecedented demand for high-performance computing hardware.

In September, Nvidia announced plans to invest up to $100 billion in OpenAI, a deal that would represent a landmark transaction in the technology sector if completed at that scale. The proposed investment would provide OpenAI with substantial capital and, crucially, long-term access to Nvidia's most advanced chips. These processors are widely regarded as essential for training and running large language models and other AI systems at scale.

For OpenAI, the investment would help secure the computing resources needed to maintain its leadership position as rivals, including major U.S. and Chinese tech firms, pour billions of dollars into competing AI platforms. The company's models require enormous processing power, and supply constraints for cutting-edge chips have become a strategic bottleneck across the industry.

For Nvidia, the move would further cement its central role in the global AI ecosystem. The company has emerged as one of the biggest beneficiaries of the AI boom, with its data-center chips forming the backbone of many leading AI products. By strengthening its partnership with OpenAI, Nvidia would not only secure a major customer but also gain deeper insight into the future direction of AI development.

Huang's remarks also appeared aimed at reassuring investors and partners that the relationship between the two companies remains strong.

Kevin Warsh emerges as Trump's pick for Fed chair

Kevin Warsh fits President Trump's profile for Fed chair, but interest rate cuts and reform plans remain uncertain.

WASHINGTON

Kevin Warsh appears to check many of the boxes President Donald Trump values in a nominee to lead the Federal Reserve, combining close political and social ties to the president with deep connections on Wall Street and a polished public presence. Yet despite Trump's enthusiasm, major questions remain over how aggressively Warsh would cut interest rates and how quickly he could implement what he has described as a regime change at the U.S. central bank.

Trump has repeatedly urged the Federal Reserve to slash interest rates to what he characterizes as crisis-level territory, potentially as low as 1%. Such a move would represent a dramatic shift from current monetary policy and would place the Fed among the most accommodative central banks globally. Whether Warsh would support such deep cuts is far from clear.

Warsh previously served as a Fed governor from 2006 to 2011, a period that included the global financial crisis. During that tenure, he built a reputation as an inflation hawk, often emphasizing the risks of loose monetary policy and the importance of central bank credibility. That history suggests he may be reluctant to embrace the kind of rapid and sweeping rate reductions Trump has publicly demanded.

Even if Warsh were inclined to cut rates aggressively, structural and institutional constraints could limit his ability to do so. Monetary policy decisions at the Fed are made collectively by the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), which consists of 18 policymakers. Their views, combined with incoming economic data on inflation, employment, and growth, would heavily influence the pace and scale of any easing cycle.

Financial markets have so far reacted cautiously to Warsh's nomination. Interest rate futures continue to price in only two quarter-point rate cuts in 2026, which would bring the benchmark federal funds rate down from its current range of 3.50% to 3.75%. Notably, those expectations did not shift significantly after Trump announced Warsh's nomination in a social media post, suggesting investors remain skeptical that sweeping policy changes are imminent. Warsh's potential leadership also raises broader questions about governance and independence at the Federal Reserve.

Tata Motors posts January sales at 71,066 units, up 47.1%

MUMBAI

Indian automobile manufacturer Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. on Sunday said that its sales in the domestic and international market, including that of electric vehicles (EV), stood at 71,066 units in January 2026, marking a 47.1 per cent rise year-on-year. The total sales, including EVs, were 48,316 units in January 2025.

Passenger vehicle domestic sales, including electric vehicles, rose 46.1 per cent YoY to 70,222 units in January 2026 from 48,076 units a year earlier, the release said.

Further, the passenger vehicle international business sales were 844 units in January 2026, posting a 251.7 per cent uptick from 240 units in January 2025.

Electric vehicle sales across international business and domestic markets reached 9,052 units in January 2026, up 72.7 per cent YoY, the release said.

The company shared a major milestone in December 2024 that over 2.5 lakh TATA.ev cars are running on Indian roads. Tata's Nexon.ev also created history by becoming the first electric car in India to cross one lakh cumulative sales.

Tata Motors said in December that it accounted for around 66 per cent of all electric passenger vehicles sold in India, meaning nearly two out of every three EVs on the road come from the Tata stable.

Its EV portfolio includes the Tiago.ev, Punch.ev, Nexon.ev, Curvv.ev and Harrier.ev.

The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) accelerated India's transition towards greater adoption of electric vehicles during 2025, with record investments under its Production Linked Incentive Scheme for the auto sector and the successful implementation of the PM E-DRIVE initiative.

Claims to the tune of Rs 1,999.94 crore were disbursed under the PLI-Auto Scheme during 2024-25.

Till December 31, 2025, incentives have been provided for over 13.61 lakh electric vehicles, which include more than 10.42 lakh two-wheelers, over 2.38 lakh three-wheelers, 79,540 electric cars, and 1,391 electric buses, an official statement said.

HIGHLIGHTS OF BUDGET 2026:
India's Roadmap to Viksit Bharat

On February 1, 2026, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented India's Union Budget for 2026-27, marking her ninth consecutive budget presentation. In an unprecedented move, the budget was presented on a Sunday, the first time in India's independent history that this has occurred. With the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 guiding policy decisions, the budget outlined a comprehensive framework focused on infrastructure development, technological advancement, fiscal discipline, and inclusive growth.

Economic Context and Fiscal Discipline

India's economic trajectory has been marked by resilience and sustained growth, with the economy maintaining an average growth rate of around 7 percent. The government has strengthened domestic manufacturing capacity, ensured energy security and reduced critical import dependencies since 2014. The budget reflects the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation, projecting the fiscal deficit for 2026-27 at 4.3 percent of GDP, down from 4.4 percent in the current fiscal year.

This gradual reduction in fiscal deficit demonstrates the government's prudent approach to managing public finances while continuing to invest in growth-enabling infrastructure. The focus on fiscal discipline becomes particularly significant in the context of global economic uncertainty, where maintaining macroeconomic stability is crucial for sustained growth.

Sitharaman emphasized that nearly 25 crore people have come out of multi-dimensional poverty, highlighting the tangible impact of the government's development initiatives. This achievement represents one of the most significant poverty reduction efforts globally and underscores the effectiveness of targeted welfare schemes, direct benefit transfers, and inclusive growth policies implemented over the past decade.

The budget aims to ensure that the dividends of growth reach farmers, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and the youth, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive development.

By targeting these specific demographic groups, the government acknowledges that true economic progress must be measured not just by GDP growth figures but by the improvement in living standards across all sections of society.

Infrastructure and Connectivity: Building the Future

Capital expenditure remains a cornerstone of the government's growth strategy. The allocation for capital expenditure has been raised to Rs 12.2 lakh crore for the coming financial year, representing an increase of about 9 percent from the previous year's Rs 11.21 lakh crore. This substantial investment underscores the government's focus on building world-class infrastructure that can support India's growing economy.

High-Speed Rail Corridors

One of the most significant announcements was the proposal for seven new high-speed rail corridors that will act as growth connectors between major Indian cities.

These high-speed rail projects are expected to revolutionize intercity connectivity, reduce travel time significantly, and promote environmentally sustainable passenger and cargo movement across the country.

These corridors include

- Mumbai to Pune
- Pune to Hyderabad
- Hyderabad to Bengaluru
- Bengaluru to Chennai
- Delhi to Varanasi

Women Empowerment: SHE-Marts Initiative

Building on the success of the Lakhpati Didi Programme, Finance Minister Sitharaman proposed establishing Self-Help Entrepreneur (SHE) Marts as community-owned retail outlets for rural women-led enterprises. This initiative represents a strategic shift from credit-led livelihoods to helping women become owners of enterprises.

The SHE-Marts will provide rural women entrepreneurs with dedicated retail spaces to market their products, enhancing their economic independence and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. This initiative aligns with the government's focus on women-led development and economic empowerment.

SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION 2.0: Positioning India as a Global Chip Hub

In a move to strengthen India's position in the global semiconductor ecosystem, the government announced the rollout of India Semiconductor Mission 2.0 with a significantly increased outlay of Rs 40,000 crore. This enhanced funding represents the government's commitment to accelerating domestic manufacturing capabilities in the critical semiconductor sector.

The upgraded mission places strong emphasis on industry-led research, advanced training centers, and deeper collaboration with global technology leaders. Recognizing the importance of raw material availability, mineral-rich states such as Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu will receive targeted support to strengthen the raw material pipeline essential for chip production.

This initiative aims to reduce India's dependence on imported semiconductors and position the country as a significant player in the global chip manufacturing landscape, supporting the broader Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) vision.

Freight Corridor Development

A dedicated freight corridor from Dankuni in West Bengal to Surat in Gujarat was also announced to facilitate efficient cargo movement. This corridor will enhance logistics efficiency and support India's manufacturing and export sectors by reducing transportation costs and time.

Tax Reforms and Compliance Simplification

While the Finance Minister announced no changes to income tax slabs under both the new and old tax regimes, several taxpayer-friendly reforms were introduced to simplify compliance and reduce procedural hurdles.

Extended Deadlines for Tax Returns

The deadline for filing revised income-tax returns has been extended from December 31 to March 31, with taxpayers able to make corrections by paying a nominal fee. This provides greater flexibility for taxpayers to rectify errors in their returns without facing stringent penalties.

Additionally, the filing deadlines have been staggered to ease compliance

- Individuals filing ITR-1 and ITR-2 continue to have the July 31 deadline
- Non-audit business cases and trusts can now file returns until August 31

TDS and TCS Rationalization

Several changes were made to Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) and Tax Collected at Source (TCS) rates:

- TDS rate on liquor, scrap and mineral was rationalized to 2 percent
- TCS rate on sale of overseas tour program packages was reduced from the current 5 percent and 20 percent to 2 percent without any stipulation of amount
- TCS rate for pursuing education and medical purposes under the Liberalized Remittance Scheme was reduced from 5 percent to 2 percent.

Securities Transaction Tax Adjustments

In a move affecting capital markets, the Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on futures was raised to 0.05 percent from 0.02 percent, while STT on options premium was hiked to 0.15 percent. These changes aim to rationalize market transactions and enhance revenue collection.

Special Tax Exemptions

Several targeted tax exemptions were announced:

- Interest awarded by the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal to a natural person will be exempt from Income Tax
- A tax holiday was announced for any foreign company investing in cloud services in data centers in India
- Basic customs duty was exempted on 17 drugs or medicines used for cancer treatment to provide relief to patients

Customs Duty Rationalization

The tariff rate on all dutiable goods imported for personal use was reduced from 20 percent to 10 percent to rationalize the customs duty structure. This reduction will benefit individuals importing goods for personal consumption and align India's customs regime with international practices.

The budget also proposed to increase the limit for duty-free imports of specified inputs used for processing seafoods for export from the current 1 percent to 3 percent of FOB value of the previous year's export turnover, supporting the seafood export industry.

Sector-Wise Budget Allocation

The Union Budget 2026 earmarked substantial funds across key departments. Transport received the highest allocation at Rs 5.98 lakh crore, followed closely by defence at Rs 5.94 lakh crore. Rural development was allocated Rs 2.73 lakh crore, home affairs Rs 2.55 lakh crore, and agriculture and allied activities Rs 1.62 lakh crore, reflecting the government's priorities across various sectors.

MSME Support and Growth Fund

Recognizing the crucial role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in employment generation and economic growth, the budget introduced a Rs 10,000 crore MSME Growth Fund. This fund addresses the critical gap in equity financing for MSMEs, which often struggle with excessive debt. Too much debt leaves little room for these enterprises to absorb economic shocks or invest in growth opportunities. The equity-based approach of the Growth Fund represents a paradigm shift in how the government supports MSMEs, moving from debt-heavy financing to a more balanced capital structure.

Additionally, Rs 2,000 crore was added to the Self-Reliant India Fund to support businesses ready to scale up. This addition helps MSMEs transition from managing liabilities to building capabilities, enabling them to compete more effectively in domestic and international markets.

Enhanced credit guarantee cover for MSMEs was increased from Rs 5 crore to Rs 10 crore, providing better access to institutional credit and enabling these enterprises to expand their operations. This enhancement in credit guarantee will particularly benefit small manufacturers and service providers who have viable business models but lack collateral to secure loans from traditional banking channels.

Industry bodies have been advocating for measures to improve MSMEs' access to credit, extend support schemes, and simplify compliance norms. The budget's MSME-focused initiatives respond to these demands while also addressing the need for easier access to export markets and improved ease of doing business.

Agricultural Initiatives and Rural Development

The budget demonstrated continued commitment to the agricultural sector with several targeted initiatives:

- Launch of Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana to boost agricultural productivity
- Introduction of a 6-year Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses focusing on Tur, Urad, and Masoor
- Establishment of a Makhana Board in Bihar for improved production and marketing
- Enhanced loan limit under Kisan Credit Cards from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh
- Launch of a comprehensive program for vegetables and fruits in partnership with states

These measures aim to enhance farm productivity, diversify agricultural operations toward higher-value activities, and improve farmer incomes.

Education and Digital Connectivity

Investment in human capital received significant attention in the budget. The government announced a significant increase in the number of Atal Tinkering Labs in government schools to promote innovation and entrepreneurship among students. Additionally, broadband connectivity will be provided to all government secondary schools and primary health centers, bridging the digital divide and enabling access to digital education and healthcare services. Medical education is set to receive a boost with the expansion of 10,000 additional seats in the next year, addressing the shortage of medical professionals in the country.

Budget 2026 represents a carefully calibrated approach to India's development aspirations. By maintaining fiscal discipline while increasing capital expenditure, introducing targeted welfare measures, simplifying tax compliance, and investing in critical infrastructure and technology, the government has laid out a roadmap that balances growth with sustainability. The emphasis on semiconductors, high-speed rail corridors, women entrepreneurship, agricultural productivity, and MSME support demonstrates a multi-pronged strategy to accelerate India's journey toward becoming Viksit Bharat by 2047. As the budget proposals are implemented over the coming year, their impact on economic growth, job creation, and inclusive development will determine India's trajectory in an increasingly competitive global economy. With no major disruptions to the tax structure and a focus on execution rather than headline announcements, Budget 2026 signals policy continuity and a commitment to steady, sustainable progress toward India's long-term development goals.

Alcaraz conquers Melbourne, completes career Grand Slam

Rallying from early setback, Spaniard denies Djokovic historic 25th major title

MELBOURNE

Carlos Alcaraz etched his name into tennis history on Sunday, becoming the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam after defeating Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open final. The 22-year-old Spaniard fought back from a set down to beat the 10-time Melbourne champion 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5, sealing his maiden Australian Open crown and blocking Djokovic's bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title.

Facing one of the sport's greatest competitors on Rod Laver Arena, Alcaraz showed remarkable composure and resilience. Djokovic started aggressively, claiming the opening set as he chased history. But the world No.1 responded with relentless defense, explosive shot-making, and superior movement, gradually wresting control of the match.

Alcaraz's ability to retrieve seemingly unreachable shots and extend rallies proved decisive against the 38-year-old Serb. As the contest wore on, the Spaniard maintained intense pressure, forcing errors and capitalising on key moments. He converted five of 16 break points, while Djokovic managed only two of six.

When the final point was won, Alcaraz dropped his racket and lay flat on his back, overwhelmed by emotion. He later signed a television camera lens with the words: "Job finished. 4/4 Complete." The victory made him the youngest man to claim all four major singles titles, achieving the feat at 22 years and 272 days.

At the net, Djokovic congratulated his rival warmly and later praised him during the trophy presentation. "What you're doing is historic, legendary," Djokovic said, acknowledging the significance of Alcaraz's achievement.

Alcaraz, who recently parted ways with longtime coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, paid tribute to his team and new coach Samuel Lopez. "Nobody knows how hard I've been working to get this trophy. I chased this moment for so long," he said.

The final also had a touch of nostalgia, with Rafael Nadal watching from the stands. Both Djokovic and Alcaraz addressed the Spanish legend, underlining the generational shift unfolding in men's tennis.

With seven Grand Slam titles now to his name, Alcaraz has not only conquered Melbourne but firmly announced himself as the defining force of the sport's new era.

Barcelona Secure Marcus Rashford's Future despite Man United's Interest

BARCELONA

Rashford has excelled for Barcelona this season, tallying nine goals and twelve assists.

FC Barcelona have moved to ensure Marcus Rashford remains at the club despite Manchester United's recent change of heart under interim manager Michael Carrick. Reports had suggested Carrick wanted to reintegrate the England international, currently on loan at Barcelona, if he were appointed full-time at Old Trafford.

Rashford, who has thrived in Catalonia this season, has already recorded nine goals and 12 assists in 31 appearances across all competitions. His performances have made him a key figure in Barcelona's attacking setup, and the club is determined to maintain continuity beyond the current campaign.

According to Mundo Deportivo, Barcelona hold absolute priority over Rashford due to the €30 million purchase clause embedded in the loan agreement. Should the club choose to activate the clause, Manchester United would have no ability to block the transfer. A renegotiation would be the only circumstance in which United could intervene.

Rashford had been sidelined during Ruben Amorim's tenure at Old Trafford, but Carrick's takeover reignited the possibility of a recall. His short-term contract until June 30 adds to the speculation, though Carrick reportedly wants to reunite with Rashford if given the permanent role.

Despite these developments, Rashford himself remains focused on Barcelona. He is content in the dressing room and has integrated well into Xavi's system, making him comfortable with his current situation.

The Catalan side's proactive approach, backed by the binding purchase clause, ensures that they retain control of his future, regardless of United's managerial plans.

With the European campaign underway and Barcelona aiming for domestic glory, Rashford's continuity provides stability to their attacking unit. For now, the forward's performances on the pitch remain the priority, while his long-term future is securely tied to the Spanish giants unless the club opts to renegotiate the transfer fee.

German Football Federation Rules Out WC Boycott Despite Calls To Oppose Trump

BERLIN

The German Football Federation (DFB) has firmly ruled out a boycott of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, despite recent internal calls to use the global event as a platform to protest against former U.S. President Donald Trump's policies and rhetoric.

In a statement issued, the DFB said a boycott "is not currently under consideration," emphasising its belief in the unifying power of sport and the positive global impact the World Cup can have. The federation stated that its goal is to "strengthen this positive force — not to prevent it," signalling a commitment to participation rather than political protest.

The debate was sparked when DFB vice-president Oke Göttlich, who also serves as president of Bundesliga club St. Pauli, suggested that Germany should consider a boycott to send a strong message over Trump's controversial actions and statements. However, the federation's executive committee made it clear that decisions on sports policy should be discussed internally rather than in public discourse.

The 2026 World Cup, co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19, has already faced scrutiny not just over political tensions but also concerns about high ticket prices and potential travel or visa restrictions affecting supporters from certain nations. Nonetheless, the DFB reiterated its intention to compete and to promote a peaceful celebration of football.

Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter also weighed in last week, advising fans to stay away from the tournament, although he has historically opposed boycotts.

Germany's national team will be present at the tournament, aiming to add to its four World Cup titles while emphasising football's role in bringing people together rather than serving as a vehicle for political protest.

India begins SAFF U19 Women's Championship with win against Nepal

POKHARA

India kicked off their SAFF U19 Women's Championship 2026 campaign on a positive note with a gritty 1-0 victory over hosts Nepal at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium.

The decisive moment came just after the restart, when Pearl Fernandes found the net in the 49th minute to secure all three points for the Young Tigresses. Although the tournament is an under-19 event, India have fielded an under-17 squad as part of their preparation for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup later this year.

The match also marked the first game in charge for newly appointed head coach Pamela Conti, who handed debuts to Redima Devi Chingkhamayum and Alva Devi Senjam, both of whom were named in the starting XI. On a rough pitch that made ground play difficult, India began with intent, relying on aerial balls and diagonal passes to trouble the Nepal defence.

India created early openings, with captain Julan Nongmaithem attempting to release Redima through the middle, while Nepal responded with a chance of their own in the 10th minute, only for defender Elizabed Lakra to show composure and deny the hosts. The first half largely turned into a midfield battle, with uneven conditions forcing India to adopt a more direct approach.

The breakthrough arrived four minutes into the second half. Substitute Pritika weaved past a defender and cut the ball back into the box. The Nepal goalkeeper managed a touch but could only parry it into Pearl's path, and the midfielder finished clinically from close range.

Nepal pushed for an equaliser and came close on the hour mark when Srijana Baduwal volleyed into the side-netting from a corner. India, however, defended resolutely and controlled the closing stages.

Pritika missed a late chance to double the lead, but the narrow win was enough to put India second in the table behind Bangladesh, who thrashed Bhutan 12-0 earlier.

India will face Bangladesh on February 2, with the top two teams progressing to a one-off final.

Devika Sihag Secures Maiden Super 300 Title at Thailand Masters

NEW DELHI

Young Indian shuttler Devika Sihag clinched the biggest title of her career on Sunday, winning her maiden BWF Super 300 crown at the Thailand Masters after Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei retired injured during the women's singles final.

The 20-year-old from Haryana was firmly in control of the summit clash, leading 21-8, 6-3, when world No. 68 Goh pulled out due to a hamstring injury. The win handed Devika her first Super 300 title at the USD 250,000 tournament and marked a major milestone in her rapidly progressing career.

Ranked world No. 63, Devika displayed composure and authority from the outset, opening up an early 4-0 lead in the first game with deep returns and smart variation. Her ability to mix cross-court and straight smashes with delicate drops kept Goh guessing as the Indian surged ahead to a commanding 11-4 lead at the interval and closed out the opening game comfortably.

The Malaysian, a two-time former world junior champion, appeared visibly fatigued after a demanding week that saw her play four three-game matches before the final. Her movement was laboured, and discomfort in her left leg became increasingly evident as the match progressed. After the change of ends in the second game, Devika continued to dictate play, moving to a 6-3 advantage as Goh struggled to keep up with the rallies. Moments later, the Malaysian decided to retire, sealing a memorable triumph for the Indian shuttler.

Devika trains under coach Umendra Rana at the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru and has also worked alongside two-time Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu under Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama.

Her rise on the international circuit has been steady. She won her maiden international title at the Malaysia International in August 2025, finished runner-up at the Indonesia Masters Super 100, and contributed to India's mixed team bronze at the 2025 World University Games, underlining her growing stature in women's singles badminton.

No T20 WC, No Problem: Bangladesh Rolls Out Domestic T20 Cup

NEW DELHI

Left out of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, Bangladesh has chosen to respond on the field rather than dwell on disappointment. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced the launch of a new domestic competition — the ODOMMO Bangladesh T20 Cup 2026 — aimed at keeping the country's top white-ball players engaged during the global tournament window.

The decision comes in the aftermath of the ICC replacing Bangladesh with Scotland for the 2026 T20 World Cup. With no international commitments scheduled for that period, the BCB moved swiftly to fill the void by creating a short, high-intensity tournament designed to maintain competitive sharpness among leading players. "Odommo," meaning "indomitable" in Bangla, reflects the board's attempt to turn a setback into an opportunity.

Scheduled to be held from February 5 to 9, the tournament will feature three teams — Dhumketu XI, Durbar XI and Duronto XI. Bangladesh T20I captain Litton Kumar Das will lead Dhumketu XI, Najmul Hossain Shanto will captain Durbar XI, while Akbar Ali has been named skipper of Duronto XI. All matches will be played under lights, with group games on February 5, 6 and 7, followed by the final on February 9.

The BCB has stressed that the competition will be more than a symbolic replacement. Total prize money and player fees worth Tk 2.5 crore (approximately Rs 1.87 crore) have been allocated to ensure intensity and motivation. Match fees, prize incentives and the introduction of the Impact Player rule are intended to add a competitive edge.

A fitness camp at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium will precede the tournament, while experienced domestic coaches have been appointed across teams. With affordable ticket prices and cultural programmes planned before each matchday, the BCB hopes the ODOMMO Bangladesh T20 Cup will not only fill a calendar gap but also reassert Bangladesh's depth and resilience in the shortest format.

19-year-old Indian Grandmaster *Divya Deshmukh* Set for Norway Chess Debut

NEW DELHI : Indian Grandmaster and reigning Women's World Cup champion Divya Deshmukh is set to make her maiden appearance at Norway Chess Women later this year, marking another major milestone in her rapidly rising career. The prestigious tournament will be held in Oslo from May 25 to June 5, with Deshmukh becoming the youngest competitor in the women's event since its inception in 2024.At just 19, Deshmukh has enjoyed a breakthrough season that has firmly established her among the world's elite. Her sensational triumph at the Women's World Cup in Batumi not only earned her the biggest title of her career but also secured her the Grandmaster title and qualification for the Women's Candidates tournament. She is only the fourth Indian woman to achieve the GM title, underlining the significance of her ascent. Deshmukh will face a formidable field at Norway Chess Women, including defending champion Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine and reigning World Blitz champion Bibisara Assaubayeva of Kazakhstan. The tournament is held alongside the main Norway Chess Open and follows the same format, prize fund and playing conditions, a structure widely praised for promoting gender parity in elite chess.Expressing her excitement, Deshmukh said she was eager to experience both the country and the competition.

NZ SKIPPER ADMITS INDIA'S EXPLOSIVE BATTING DEPTH LEFT VISITORS HELPLESS IN DECIDER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner conceded that Ishan Kishan's blistering century in Thiruvananthapuram left his side with no answers, admitting that India's batting firepower has become increasingly difficult to contain. After watching Kishan tear apart the bowling attack in the fifth and final T20I, Santner said the knock felt like a continuation of the damage already inflicted by Abhishek Sharma earlier in the series.

Kishan smashed a breathtaking maiden T20I hundred, scoring 103 off just 43 balls, as India piled up a daunting 271 for five — a total that effectively decided the contest. Santner said once Indian batters begin to dominate in tandem, bowlers are often reduced to damage control. "Sometimes, when guys are going like that, you just have to put your hands up," he said at the post-match press conference.

Drawing comparisons with Abhishek Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav, Santner highlighted India's enviable depth. "We've seen it from Abhishek, we've seen it from Surya, and now from Ishan. For India, all their batters are scoring runs at different stages, and they should be really happy with that," he added, pointing to India's staggering acceleration — 170 runs in the final 10 overs. Kishan's Trivandrum masterclass capped a remarkable comeback series. After a quiet return with a single-digit score in the opener, the left-hander roared back with a rapid 76 in the second T20I before saving his best for last. He ended the series with 215 runs from four innings, averaging 53.75 at a strike rate in excess of 230.

Santner's remarks also underlined the growing threat posed by Abhishek Sharma, who repeatedly forced New Zealand onto the back foot. Abhishek finished as the third-highest run-scorer despite a golden duck, striking close to 250 and registering a 14-ball fifty earlier in the series.

With the T20 World Cup just days away, Kishan finding peak form alongside Abhishek has strengthened India's top-order arsenal.

Govt proposes *Khelo India* Mission to transform sports sector

Mission aims decade-long overhaul through coaching excellence, sports science integration, infrastructure expansion nationwide

NEW DELHI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed the launch of an ambitious Khelo India Mission in the Union Budget 2026, outlining a long-term roadmap to transform India's sports ecosystem over the next decade.

Presenting her ninth consecutive Budget in Parliament, Sitharaman said the sports sector holds immense potential for employment generation, skilling and entrepreneurship. Building on the foundation laid by the Khelo India programme, introduced in 2017, the proposed mission seeks to systematically nurture sporting talent and create a robust sports culture across the country.

"The sports sector provides multiple avenues for employment, skilling and job opportunities. Taking forward the

systematic nurturing of sports talent set in motion through the Khelo India programme, I propose to launch a Khelo India Mission to transform the sports sector over the next decade," the Finance Minister said in her Budget speech.

A key focus of the mission will be the structured development of coaches and support staff, an area repeatedly flagged as crucial for India's sporting progress. The plan also envisages the integration of sports science and modern technology to improve athlete performance, injury management and training methodologies.

Promotion of competitive leagues and tournaments at various levels forms another pillar of the mission, aimed at strengthening grassroots participation and building a sustainable talent pipeline.

Sitharaman also underscored the importance of expanding and upgrading sports infrastructure for both training and competition.

Highlighting economic opportunities, the Finance Minister said India has the potential to emerge as a global hub for high-quality, affordable sports goods. A dedicated initiative will be launched to promote manufacturing, research and innovation in sports equipment design and material sciences.

The announcement comes as India gears up to host the 100th Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad in 2030 and prepares to bid for the 2036 Olympic Games. Recently, a Sports Ministry-appointed task force led by Pullela Gopichand had also called for a stronger emphasis on building a pool of world-class coaches, aligning closely with the mission's objectives.

ISL clubs seek cost relief and stay on relegation ahead of 2026 season

NEW DELHI

All Indian Super League (ISL) clubs, including Bengaluru FC, have jointly approached the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports seeking urgent intervention to stabilise the league ahead of the 2026 season, scheduled to start on February 14. In their representation, the clubs highlighted financial stress, governance uncertainty and lack of commercial clarity as major threats to sustainability. The absence of a confirmed commercial partner, with the AIFF's bidding process still ongoing, has made broadcast and sponsorship revenues unpredictable.

A key demand is a temporary freeze on relegation for three to five seasons, citing structural instability and the Justice L Nageswara Rao Committee's November 2025 report. The clubs have also sought cost relief, including waivers on stadium rentals, utilities and security expenses.

Other requests include relaxation of licensing norms, reduction of broadcast charges and temporary public sector financial support.

D Gukesh draws with Aravindh, title hopes dashed

WIJK AAN ZEE

Reigning world champion D Gukesh saw his title challenge at the Tata Steel Masters 2026 effectively come to an end after settling for a draw against compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram in round 11 of the prestigious tournament. The result left Gukesh on 5.5 points, ruling him out of contention with only two rounds remaining.

Needing a win to stay in the title race, Gukesh struggled to break through Aravindh's solid defensive setup and was eventually forced to split the point. It was a disappointing day overall for the Indian contingent, as R Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi also suffered defeats. Praggnanandhaa went down to Germany's Vincent Keymer, who has displayed strong form throughout the event. Arjun adopted an aggressive strategy against Uzbek Grandmaster Javokhir Sindarov but over-pressed in a complex middlegame, conceding defeat. Sindarov's victory further consolidated Uzbekistan's dominance in the tournament. With two rounds to go, the title race has narrowed to an all-Uzbek duel, with Sindarov and Nodirbek Abdusattorov sharing the lead on seven points. Abdusattorov drew with Jorden van Foreest to retain his position at the top. Elsewhere, Anish Giri defeated Turkey's Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus to remain in the chasing pack. Gukesh will aim to finish strongly against Hans Moke Niemann and Keymer in the final rounds.

Anahat Singh enters final of Squash on Fire Open in Washington

Teenage Indian squash star reaches maiden PSA bronze-level final

NEW DELHI

India's rising squash sensation Anahat Singh continued her impressive surge on the professional circuit by advancing to the final of the Squash on Fire Open, a PSA bronze-level tournament, in Washington.

The 17-year-old Indian, ranked world No.31 and seeded seventh, produced a composed performance to defeat America's Sabrina Sobhy, the world No.23, 3-1 in the semifinals. Anahat clinched the match 11-9, 11-3, 9-11, 11-5 to reach her maiden final at this level on the Professional Squash Association (PSA) Tour. Facing the higher-ranked Sobhy, Anahat displayed remarkable maturity and tactical awareness. She edged a tightly contested opening game before dominating the second with sharp shot placement and swift movement. Although Sobhy responded by taking the third game, the Indian teenager regrouped quickly, controlled the rallies, and dictated the tempo to close out the match convincingly.

Anahat's run to the final has been marked by consistency against high-quality opposition. Earlier, she delivered one of the standout performances of her career by defeating second seed Sana Ibrahim of Egypt in the quarterfinals, underlining her growing ability to challenge elite players.

In the final, Anahat will face top seed and world No.10 Georgina Kennedy of England. While the challenge is significant, Anahat's breakthrough run reflects her steady progress and further strengthens India's presence in women's squash.

P V Sindhu pulls out of Badminton Asia Team Championship

NEW DELHI

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu has withdrawn from the upcoming Badminton Asia Team Championships, delivering a significant setback to India's medal hopes at the continental tournament scheduled to begin on February 3 in Qingdao, China.

A former world champion, Sindhu had recently returned to competitive action after recovering from a foot injury that sidelined her from October last year. However, she will miss the team event due to what has been described as a minor physical issue. "Sindhu has withdrawn from the Asia Team Championships due to a slight niggle," a source aware of the development told.

The 30-year-old has endured a series of injury setbacks over the past year. She had earlier pulled out of the 2025 Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships after suffering a hamstring injury during a training camp in Guwahati. Following her comeback, Sindhu showed encouraging signs by reaching the semifinals of the Malaysia Open, before bowing out in the first round of the India Open and making the quarterfinals of the Indonesia Masters.

Sindhu's absence significantly weakens India's chances in the women's team competition, especially after the historic triumph at the 2024 edition in Malaysia, where India clinched their first-ever gold in the event. Without their most experienced campaigner, India will be relying on a relatively young and inexperienced squad to navigate the challenging continental field. India have been placed in Group Y alongside Thailand and Myanmar. In Sindhu's absence, the onus in singles will fall on world junior championships silver medallist Tanvi Sharma, along with Unnati Hooda, Rakshita Sree Santhosh Ramraj and Malvika Bansod. The doubles challenge will be led by Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly, who bring valuable experience at the international level.

ICC T20 World Cup: Injured Pat Cummins out of squad, Dwarshuis named replacement

SYDNEY

Australia suffered a significant blow ahead of next month's ICC T20 World Cup with premier fast bowler Pat Cummins ruled out after failing to recover from a persistent back injury. Left-arm pacer Ben Dwarshuis has been named as his replacement in the final squad for the global tournament to be held in India and Sri Lanka.

Cummins, one of Australia's most experienced campaigners across formats, managed to play only one of the five Ashes Tests against England earlier this season. Despite concerns over his fitness, selectors had retained him in the provisional World Cup squad, hoping he would be available at least for the Super Eight stage. However, medical assessments confirmed he would need more time to regain full fitness.

"With Pat needing more time to recover from his back injury, Ben is a ready replacement who offers a left-arm pace option as well as dynamic fielding and late-order hitting," chief selector Tony Dodemaide said. He added that Dwarshuis' ability to swing the ball at good pace and use clever variations would suit the conditions expected in Sri Lanka and India. The selectors also made a change to the batting line-up, bringing in Matt Renshaw in place of Matthew Short. Veteran Steve Smith, despite being in good form in the Big Bash League, failed to secure a spot in the 15-member squad.

"With the top order settled and spin-heavy conditions expected in the pool stages in Sri Lanka, we feel Matt provides extra middle-order support," Dodemaide explained. He also pointed out that Renshaw's left-handed batting adds variety to the middle order, particularly with Tim David returning to action early in the tournament.

Renshaw made his T20 international debut on Thursday, scoring 15 runs in Australia's defeat to Pakistan in Lahore. The Mitchell Marsh-led side is currently playing a three-match T20I series in Pakistan as part of its World Cup preparations.

Australia, champions in 2021, will begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland on February 11 in Colombo.

'The sky wasn't blue for a year': Suryakumar after ending run drought with series-winning show

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India captain Suryakumar Yadav admitted that the past year tested his patience and belief, but said perseverance and clarity helped him script a stirring comeback during the five-match T20I series against New Zealand.

After enduring a run drought stretching across 23 innings, Suryakumar rediscovered his trademark flair to finish as the leading run-scorer of the series, amassing 242 runs at a strike rate close to 200. His three fifty-plus scores played a decisive role in India's emphatic 4-1 series triumph, earning him the Player of the Series award.

"It feels really good. It's been a long year and a long wait for moments like this," Suryakumar said at the presentation ceremony. Reflecting on the tough phase, the Mumbai batter added with a smile, "I think the 'Sky' wasn't blue for a year. But that's life. It's part of the journey."

Suryakumar revealed that the break following the South Africa T20Is proved crucial. Spending time with close friends helped him reassess his game and focus on small but important details. "I went back to the drawing board and tried to understand what was going wrong. I knew my time would come if I kept doing the basics right," he said.

Indian captain reflects on lean phase, resurgence, and confidence surge ahead of T20 World Cup

The Indian skipper reiterated that he never doubted his form, only his returns. "I wasn't out of form, just out of runs. I stuck to my routines and trusted the process. Going into the World Cup with this feeling is really special."

Meanwhile, opener Ishan Kishan credited his resurgence to the clarity gained while batting alongside Abhishek Sharma. "His intent sets the tone. You understand the momentum required and just focus on watching the ball," Kishan said after smashing his maiden T20I hundred.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner, despite the heavy defeat, said the series offered valuable lessons. "There are plenty of positives. Being challenged by quality batters helps you learn and improve ahead of the World Cup," he noted.

Triyasha, Keerthi shine with gold as Track Asia Cup concludes

CHENNAI

The Track Asia Cup 2026 concluded on a high note at the SDAT Cycling Velodrome on the Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University (TNPESU) campus, with Indian cyclists delivering standout performances across elite and junior categories. The event witnessed intense competition and world-class racing involving top track cyclists from across Asia and beyond.

India's Triyasha Paul and Keerthi Rangaswamy dominated the women's elite Keirin event, finishing first and second respectively to underline the hosts' growing strength in sprint disciplines. Triyasha showcased tactical brilliance and explosive speed to clinch gold, while Keerthi followed closely to secure silver, giving India a memorable one-two finish in the final.

Adding to the home team's success, Thabitha Shaffi emerged victorious in the junior women's sprint, winning gold in the 200m final. Her composed ride and powerful finish helped her edge past compatriot Soman Aabha Sreeman, who settled for silver, further strengthening India's medal tally. In other notable results, Narengbam Max Singh claimed gold in the men's junior Keirin, while Lithuania's Cinga Dovydas took silver. The women's elite Omnium events saw Uzbekistan's Kozieva Nafosat assert her dominance, winning gold in both the overall standings with 120 points and the tempo race. India's Swasti Singh earned silver in the overall Omnium, reflecting consistency across events. The junior women's scratch race was won by Kazakhstan's Smailkanova Aigerim, with SDAT Racing's Kadhirvel Hashini finishing second to give local fans more reason to cheer.

The three-day competition was marked by smooth organisation, strong spectator interest and competitive racing, reaffirming Chennai's growing reputation as a hub for track cycling in Asia. With multiple podium finishes, the Indian contingent ended the Track Asia Cup on a confident note, gaining valuable exposure and momentum ahead of upcoming international championships.

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